

**Reading Fluency and Comprehension Study  
With Adult ESL Students  
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*“What effect does participation in a supplemental reading program that includes systematic fluency instruction (Reading Skills for Today’s Adults) have on the fluency and overall reading proficiency of intermediate level adult ESL students?”*

Background

Many ESL learners at our program with GED goals.....

- get “stuck” in intermediate ESL
- score high on CASAS and low on TABE
- have high oral proficiency but low academic skills
- read disfluently and slowly

Research

Literature review → strong support for using a multi-skill (including fluency), adult-topic reading program such as RSFTA with adult ESL students.

## Methodology

### Subjects

Eighteen intermediate ESL learners participated in the study, 9 in the experimental group that attended supplemental reading practice sessions which use RSFTA, and 9 in a control group that did not.

### Data Collection

- 1) Pre-test with CASAS and TABE
- 2) Pre-study questionnaire on attitudes toward reading and reading practices
- 3) Reading sessions – approximately 10 hours over 6 weeks, in which initial and final reading rate were measured in words correct per minute (WCPM)
- 4) Post-test with CASAS and TABE
- 5) Post-study questionnaire

### The Sessions

In each 1-hour RSFTA session, the group all worked with the same text, with the teacher leading the activities. The procedure was modified from the original to accommodate a same-level class and time constraint.

## Results and Findings

### Pre and Post Tests

CASAS	< 2% gain
TABE	9% average gain – experimental group 0% average gain – control group
	17% average gain – exper 3-9 yrs ed 3% average gain – exper 10+ yrs ed

**Finding 1: Reading practice with focused fluency instruction may lead to increased academic reading skills comprehension as measured by the TABE test.**

**Finding 2: Standardized reading scores from assessment tools that test lifeskills (CASAS) and academic reading skills (TABE) can vary greatly with ESL adult students, illustrating the gap between these two types of language skills.**

### Fluency

↑ reading speed – 91% of timings
Average ↑ during a session – 14.1 WCPM
<u>All</u> participants ↑ reading speed pre- to post- study

**Finding 3: Focused fluency instruction of repeated readings and listening while reading (as part of a reading program) can improve the reading fluency of adult ESL students.**

## Reading Attitudes and Practices

↑ Reading ability feeling – 9 experimental, 7 control

↑ Reading materials (outside of school) with experimental group

↑ Reading frequency (outside of school) – 3 experimental, 2 control

What worked? Experimental group said charting, listening-while-reading, reading aloud, individual pronunciation assistance were helpful.

**Finding 4: Adult ESL students show multiple benefits from supplemental reading practice, including higher reading frequency and wider variety of materials read.**

### Relevant Research and Further Reading

Burt, M. Peyton, J.K., & Adams, R. (2003). *Reading and adult English language learners: A review of the research*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

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