
TITLE

Time-extension and the second language reading performance of children with different first language literacy profiles

This is a summary of a report by Judit Kormos and Michael Ratajczak as part of the ARAGs Research Online Series. For a copy of the full report, see www.britishcouncil.org/exam/aptis/research/publications/

WHAT WE LOOKED AT:

In this study we examined how second language (L2) learners with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) benefit from extended time in L2 assessment. Research in this area is needed because judgements about awarding time extension to students with SpLDs are often made based on intuition rather than on research evidence. Our study investigated the effect of different timing conditions on reading performance in the *Aptis for Teens* test. It aimed to uncover whether Hungarian L2 learners who have below average L1 reading comprehension and word-decoding skills, which can be indicative of SpLDs, gain scores from time extension in the reading component of the *Aptis for Teens*.

The study addressed the following research question:

- Is there a differential effect of timing on different reading tasks in the *Aptis for Teens* test across students with varying levels of L1 skills?

HOW WE DID IT:

In this study second language reading performance was measured with the *Aptis for Teens Reading* test. We also assessed first language (L1) reading comprehension, word-level L1 reading skills, speeded word naming and sound awareness. 120 teenage learners of English in Hungary took the standard (45 minutes) or the extended (+25% - 56 minutes) version of the *Aptis for Teens Reading* test in small groups in a computer lab. Participants completed the paper-based Hungarian L1 reading comprehension test and filled in the participant background questionnaire. In a separate session, participants met a trained research assistant to complete the word-level L1 reading skills, speeded word naming and sound awareness tests individually.

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WHAT WE FOUND:

The analysis of the test timing revealed that the typical allotted time was sufficient for 95% of the participants and none of the participants who exceeded the time limit had an officially certified SpLD. This result suggests that the reading component of the *Aptis for Teens* test meets the criteria of universal accessibility in terms of its timing. This analysis has also shown that the established time limit is about 35% longer than students on average needed to complete the test tasks. If we take into account that the maximum time a student required to finish the test was 35 minutes, we can conclude that if we add 50% time to an average test completion time, it might allow every student to display the best of their abilities.

The results showed that time extension did not boost students' scores and did not confer an advantage for students with low level L1 skills (word-level L1 reading skills, speeded word naming and sound awareness) either. Our analysis also demonstrated that time extension was unlikely to benefit students' performance on any of the tasks, including even the comprehension of a longer passage.

We also found that low-level L1 skills combined with L1 reading comprehension scores impact on L2 reading performance. However, the role of low-level L1 skills varied depending on the reading task in the two timing conditions. This indicates that somewhat different processes might have been involved in how students solved the tasks with and without time constraints.