

Key Considerations in Reading Fluency Assessments for English Language Learners (ELLs): A Scoping Review



AUTHORS

Jessica Ho
Todd Cunningham
Esther Geva

JOURNAL

Research Synthesis in
Applied Linguistics

YEAR

2026



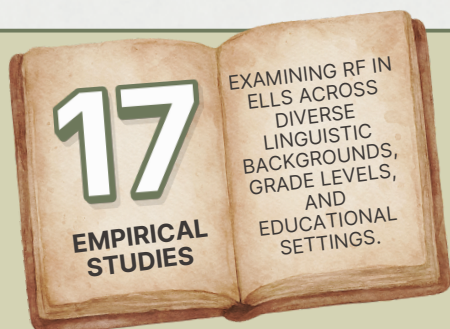
KEY TERMS

Reading Fluency (RF)

The ability to read words accurately and quickly, encompassing both speed and accuracy at the word level and in connected text passages.

Cultural Relevance

The degree to which RF assessment passages reflect students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and lived experiences.



WHAT CAN I LEARN?

How reading fluency is assessed in English language learners (ELLs) and critical gaps in current assessment tools.

WHAT DOES IT FIND?

- Many RF assessment tools, such as DIBELS and AIMSweb, are **normed on Western, English-speaking populations, failing to consider ELL students' backgrounds.**
- ELL students typically excel at the word level due to strong rapid automatised naming but **struggle with passages due to weaker oral language and vocabulary.**
- RF predicts reading comprehension for ELLs similarly to native speakers, but oral language proficiency plays a moderating role; **strong RF with poor listening or vocabulary results in low comprehension.**

HOW CAN I USE THE FINDINGS IN MY TEACHING?



Do not rely on RF assessment scores alone to judge an ELL student's overall reading ability - **a student may read fluently without fully comprehending the text.**



When interpreting RF results for ELL students, consider their **oral language proficiency, vocabulary knowledge, and familiarity with the passage topic** alongside their fluency scores.



Be aware that passage content in standardised RF tools **may be culturally unfamiliar** to ELL students, which can affect their engagement and performance independent of their actual reading skill.

