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Making Sense of Reading Scores with Reading Evaluation and Decoding System (READS)

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Abstract

It is imperative that teachers need to assess their learners' reading proficiency. Incidentally, most assessments developed and conducted by teachers merely discriminate who among their learners are performing better than the other. These assessments deplorably provide nothing more than norm reference data. Nonetheless, this is the only information that teachers have pertaining to the reading proficiency of their learners. A test score preferably should supply teachers with analytical information of what learners can or cannot do. The test scores should allow teachers to determine where the learners' position in their reading development. It is long overdue for teachers and those in the education enterprise to take a closer look behind test scores and their learners' precise abilities. As such, it was felt that a system that not only provides test scores but matches learners' performance against a benchmark and divulge their precise reading abilities should be developed. This article traces the development of a Reading Evaluation and Decoding System (READS) comprising an Encoder, Analyser and Decoder components. A prototype system was first devised based on the Malaysian school curriculum. Next, a model encoder was developed and piloted on more than three thousand students. Their scores were then used to develop the Analyser. Finally, the Decoder was developed based on data gathered from the respondents. The three components of READS were then calibrated and refined through more tests for accuracy. The study found that READS is a reliable system to evaluate learners' performance and decode their reading abilities.

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