

**Individual Paper Session 6**

**Reading and Writing**

**Tuesday, July 4**

**2:45-3:15pm**

**Exploring Flexibility and Stability of the Reading Speed as Indices of Reading Ability**

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Conceptualisations of L2 reading ability have depended largely on measures of comprehension, and relatively little has been researched on L2 reading speed, which by no means develops automatically with L2 proficiency (Segalowitz, 1991). Reading time data may help distinguish L2 readers who might otherwise appear comparable if only assessed on comprehension (Shizuka, 2000), and investigating aspects of reading speed may add useful insights into the way L2 reading ability can be characterised.

The present research has evaluated the L2 readers' flexibility in adjusting their reading speed as well as its stability to explore whether these variables can be additional indices of L2 reading ability.

Reading time data from Asian EFL learners at two different levels of reading ability (n=44 and 38) were collected through a speeded test of sentence comprehension administered individually on computer. Flexibility was assessed by recording the changes in reading time between items with successful and unsuccessful comprehension results and stability by obtaining the variability of reading speed across items.

Results of the two separate two-way ANOVAs indicated that both groups read at almost constant speeds regardless of success in comprehension and that the more proficient readers read with smaller cross-item variability than their less proficient counterpart. The presentation will detail the results and discuss their implications for the theory and research on L2 reading ability.