

■ Which Tasks Best Discriminate between Dyslexic University Students and Controls in a Transparent Language?

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The need for a battery for testing adult dyslexia, and especially university students, is being increasingly recognized in view of the increased number of adult requests for a dyslexia examination in relation to both assistance and protection from discrimination. The present study examines the discriminative validity of a battery we have developed—the Battery for the Assessment of Reading and Writing in Adulthood—through comparison of the performance of 24 university students with a history of severe developmental dyslexia and 99 controls. All the reading, writing, lexical decision and spelling tasks of the battery, except omissions in a lexical decision task and reading comprehension, showed a good discriminatory power. In addition, use of just two of these tasks (fluency in reading a text and spelling under articulatory suppression) gave 87% sensitivity and 97% specificity. Our results confirm that in transparent languages, measures of phonological automaticity are the best indexes of reading decoding competence, particularly in adults. Copyright © 2011 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

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INTRODUCTION

Dyslexia in the Adult

Dyslexia is a disorder that persists throughout a lifetime (Kemp, Parrila, & Kirby, 2009). Studying adult dyslexia is therefore important both for understanding which aspects remain critical when reading should be highly automatized and for developing adequate procedures for identifying the needs of individuals with dyslexia, so helping to avoid adverse consequences in their lives that might result from the disorder. In this respect, an important longitudinal study following a group of 26 adults with dyslexia who received a late diagnosis highlighted the secondary effects of dyslexia on self-esteem and on life choices (Michelsson, Byring, & Bjorkgren, 1985). The authors found that most of the group completed only the minimum (legally required) number of years at school, a high percentage were early school leavers, whereas just one went to university. The authors stressed the need for full consideration of the risk of negative consequences of dyslexia in adulthood (Michelsson *et al.*, 1985).

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