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CLOZE Testing and Procedure

by Alice C. Pack

Cloze testing has been tested and proven a valid procedure for testing reading ability for both native and non-native English speakers.

It is by far the easiest and fastest method yet devised for the average teacher to diagnose and place either class or individual students in a reading program. It is particularly helpful for the teacher who has ESL mixed level classes or adult education classes.

Numerous articles have been published

giving testing experiments including procedures and results. Following is a list of procedures in non-technical terms which may be followed by teachers wishing to try Cloze testing.

PRETEST

1. Select self-contained reading samples on various levels of approximately 250 words
2. Delete every 5th word in the passage, leaving both the first and the last sentences intact. Every 6th, 7th, 8th, or 9th word may be deleted instead, but the samples would have to be longer as there should be 40 to 50 deleted items in each sample. Do not choose the items to be deleted--use every fifth word. It must be objective.
3. Prepare an easy sample sentence.

TEST

4. Be sure to give clear instructions to the students. They are to fill in one word in each of the blank spaces. This word should be chosen for both semantic meaning and grammatical correctness.
5. Have students do the sample sentence and answer any questions that might

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arise.

6. Test is given, but not timed. Allow the time necessary for all students to complete the test. (within practical limits)

POST TEST

7. There are two ways to grade the cloze test. Either by accepting the exact word or by accepting any other acceptable word (a synonym). Researchers indicate that it makes no difference in the final analysis which method is used. As the exact word is easier to determine, perhaps that would be the simplest.

8. Incorrect spelling should be ignored as long as the word is recognizable. However, the word must be grammatically correct. The wrong verb tense would be wrong, i.e. run, runs, ran would have to be exact.

PLACEMENT ON BASIS OF TEST

Anderson and Hunt (unpublished paper, 1970) reported cloze scores and correspondence to (1) **independent reading level** or *that suitable for independent or recreational level*, (2) **instructional level** or *that which can be used for reading with an instructor's help*, and (3) **frustration level** or *that which is too difficult even with a teacher's help*.

*Levels of Reading and Cloze Test Percentage Scores

1. Independent Level
Above 53 per cent
2. Instructional Level
Between 44 percent and 53 per cent
3. Frustration Level
Less than 44 per cent

*From Anderson, Jonathan. "Selecting a Suitable 'Reader': Procedures for Teachers to Assess Language Difficulty," *RELC Journal* Vol. 2, No. 2, December 1971, pp. 35-42.

Students should be reading material on the first two levels. The first level for enjoyment and information outside of class, the second level for challenging work within class. The third level should be avoided as it will discourage both the student and the teacher. As students progress in their reading comprehension they will move to more advanced material. Frequent cloze testing can be given--at least as often as advancement seems indicated.

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