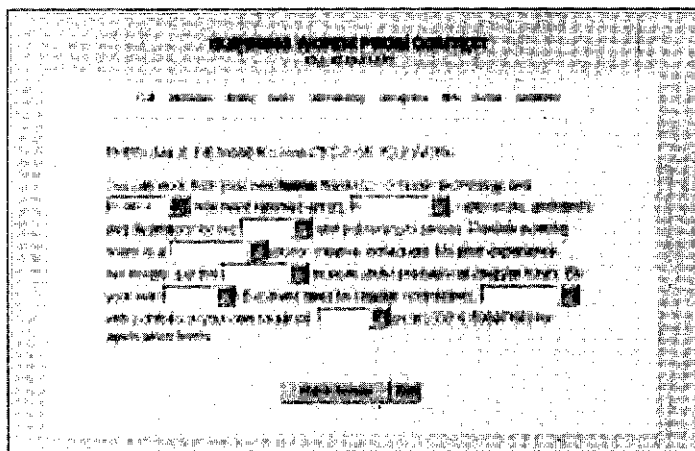


students. In addition, other researchers could collect data from both males and females and also on a much larger scale.

It is hoped that the results of the present study can shed some light on the validity of using cloze tests in high school and other academic contexts.

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are safe in supporting the null hypothesis stated earlier. In fact, we can assume that the difference in means can be due to chance and all the groups have performed equally well on the different types of cloze regardless of the intactness of the first and last sentence of the passage.

Conclusion

Overall, we may conclude that at least for the population sampled in this study, being provided with context, the first sentence and the final sentence of the cloze passage does not significantly affect the testee's performance. This prediction might have several implications. One may infer rather indirectly the possibility of performing reasonably well (with a mean of around 50) on a cloze test without being completely aware of the context. As was mentioned earlier (Carroll 1972: 189), the testee might supply the missing word by depending chiefly on what may be called "local redundancy" of a passage. Again, a word of caution is in order here; That is, the population sampled for this study had a very limited proficiency in English and the case might be as language users become more proficient, they also become increasingly competent in the use of discourse constraints. (Chihara et. al 1977)

These writers also add that the discourse

constraints measured by the cloze procedure have a relatively greater facilitating effect for the natives than for the non-natives.

Apparently, the subjects in the present study are non-native, low proficient students and we might not expect more than what the results of this research has indicated, they start reading the first sentence, perceiving separately every item and respond to it in relation to other linguistic cues surrounding the deleted word and not totally from their "expectancy grammar".

Another support for this claim is that while performing on the test, some testees were not able to answer e.g., four or five items in a row, and they just left them blank, but then from the fifth or sixth item onwards they started responding, some of which were correct.

It seems probable that these observed effects can be generalized to other EFL populations, but such possibility requires further study. In order to make the results of this research generalizable to other situations, further study in this domain is required.

One research could test problem in this study on various levels of students, ranging from elementary to advanced, to see if more proficient students would gain more from having an initial and final intact sentences than less proficient

weight to each sets of scores.

Results and discussion

To test the hypothesis of the present study certain statistical techniques were conducted. The first analysis was concerned with determining the reliability coefficients of the cloze tests. To determine the reliability coefficients, KR-21 reliability formula was used for cloze tests. Table (1) presents the descriptive statistics and the reliability coefficients of the above-mentioned tests.

Table 1. Basic standardized descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for the cloze tests

No	Del	N	n	\bar{x}	S	r(KR-21)
1	7	30	32	50.1	6.13	.81
2	7	30	33	50.43	7.06	.86
3	7	30	34	49.76	6.49	.83
4	7	30	35	49.6	8.34	.90

The second analysis dealt with determining the validity of the cloze tests. To determine the validity of the cloze tests against an external criterion, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was computed for the cloze scores and the total scores on two short reading comprehension Passages from Nelson test. The correlation between the subjects' scores obtained on the cloze tests and the scores they received on the criterion test (Nelson) was found to be, .54, .44, .64 and .71, respectively. The results of this analysis are presented in Table (2) below:

Table 2. Correlation of 4 types of cloze with Nelson reading comprehension passages

No	rxy	Pos.rxy	Com.V
1	.54	.70	.29
2	.44	.63	.19
3	.64	.66	.41
4	.71	.73	.50

Correlation coefficient, however, is just a measure which indicates how closely the two variables go together. According to Hatch & Farhady (1982), a more useful way of interpreting a correlation coefficient is to convert it into common variance between the two measures. Regarding the common variance, in spite of the relatively low common variance, especially for cloze type 2, all correlations are shown to be significant at the .02 level.

The significant correlation provides a substantial confidence in the validity of the cloze procedure as a measure of EFL reading comprehension.

By looking at the descriptive statistics (Table 1), it appears that type 2 (first intact, last blank) has resulted in a slightly better performance. Now the question is whether or not the mean scores are significantly different, not due to error variability.

Summary of the results is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of data in cloze types

	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Rowtotals
N	30	30	30	30	N=120
ΣX	1503	1504	1493	1488	5988
ΣX^2	78219	78338	77145	76638	310340

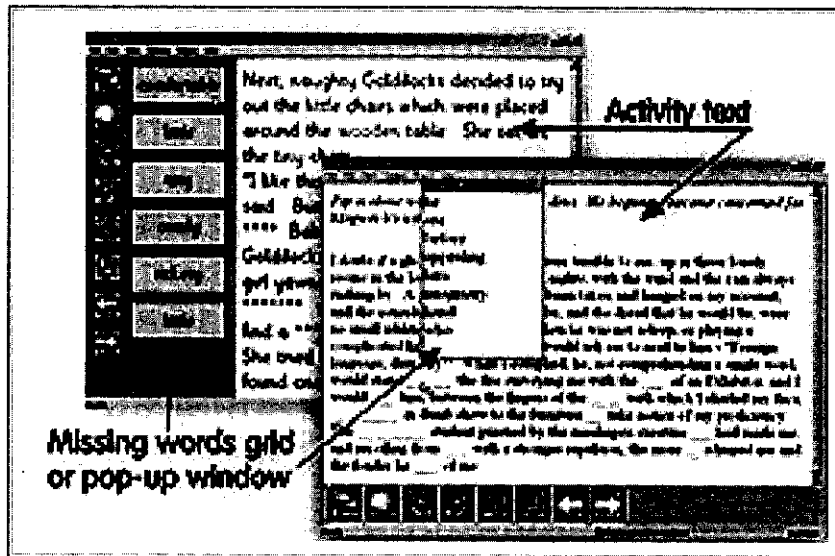
To determine the significance of differences among the four means obtained from 4 types of cloze tests, a one way ANOVA statistical test was used. The results of the one way ANOVA for the four types of cloze tests are presented in Table 4 below:

Table 4. The results of ANOVA of four types of cloze tests

Scores of variance	SS	d.f	MS	Fratio	Fcritical
Between groups	6.3	3	2.1	.02	2.69
Within groups	1153.7	116	99.41		

$P < .05$

Since the Fratio is smaller than 1 (and much smaller than Fcritical) we know that there is not a meaningful difference among the means. Thus we



present study, an attempt is made to investigate whether or not the intactness of the first and the last sentence in a cloze passage significantly affect the obtained results.

Method

Participants

Fourth grade pre-university students studying English as a foreign language at Hatef High School in Isfahan were selected randomly for the study. The subjects included 120 male students with Persian as their native language.

Materials

The materials used in this study were: 1) a reading subsection of Nelson's Reading Comprehension test which consisted of 13 questions serving as a criterion test; 2) a converted passage adopted from A Basic Course in Reading English (one passage with four conditions). For the purpose of the present research there were four combinations of conditions (intact or blank), of sentence (first or last), and order (first or last), and (first intact, last intact; first intact, last blank; first blank, last intact; first blank and last blank) labeled as types 1,2,3, and 4, respectively with 32,33,34,35 deletions each.

Procedures

To prepare a passage of appropriate level of difficulty for reading comprehension, the Fog index Readability Formula was applied and the obtained readability of the passage was found to be 13.85. This passage with the desired readability (13.85) was converted in to a 32,33,34, and 35 item multiple choice test.

It is necessary to mention here that in order to avoid any variations due to the change in the blanks, the first sentence was adopted so that to contain 14 words, and thus allowing for exactly two blanks.

Then all the converted passage were administered, scored, and the results were analyzed. It is worth noting that the tests were scored objectively. There was only one correct answer for each item and the scores were not influenced by the judgment of the scores.

The Reading subsection of Nelson's test containing a total of 13 comprehension questions was administered to the subjects two weeks before the cloze tests. Scores on the reading subsection of Nelson's test and four types of cloze passage were then, transformed to Z scores to obtain the distance of the scores from the mean as measured by standard deviation units and thus give equal

Iranian students on four types of cloze tests was investigated. The overall reading ability was measured by the reading subsection of a version of Nelson test. In addition, participants were provided with four converted passages adopted from "A Basic Course in Reading English". The results of the study supported the hypothesis that students perform equally well on different types of cloze regardless of the presence or absence of first and last sentence intactness within the chosen passages.

Key Words: cloze test, intactness, converted passage, EFL performance.

Introduction

The use of cloze procedure as a test of gauging learners' reading comprehension level has long been in vogue in the English teaching profession. However, the utility of the instrument has given rise to a number of controversial issues. On the one hand, many writers (Farhady et al, 1994; Oller et al, 1994; Birjandi et al, 2000; Mc Namara, 2000) strongly support the application of cloze for measuring the learners' global English proficiency. On the other hand, some concerned practitioners have tried critically to investigate the effectiveness of cloze tests and to attest their validity (Alderson, 1980; Farhady, 1983; Chapelle 1988; Jafarpur, 1995; Brown, 2002).

There have also been quite different claims on what the cloze test measures. According to Alderson (1979), cloze tests measure only a small part of what is involved in the reading process especially short-range grammatical constraints. Cihara et al (1989), have also tried to demonstrate that the ability to fill in cloze items is not just a matter of perceiving local redundancy of passage, but rather an awareness of the flow of discourse across sentences and paragraphs.

In a similar vein, Jonz (1990) has maintained that in attempting to replace the deleted items, the subject has to utilize contextual constraints ranging from syntax to inferred extra-linguistic situations. Accordingly, context is also said to play a vital role in answering cloze tests; therefore, it is suggested that the first sentence or a few initial sentences be left intact at the beginning and the

end of the cloze passage to provide context. But how important this can be!

Writers trying to explain what a (standard) cloze test is and what it consists of agree that a cloze test is a passage from which after every n^{th} word, a word is deleted (Cohen 1988;91).

Indubitably, most researchers conducting research on a given feature of cloze suggest that a few sentences should be left intact at the beginning and at the end of a passage to provide context. (Hinofotis 1980;23). In addition, it is generally assumed that deletions in a cloze test may begin at any point in a passage providing that an initial sequence without deletions is preserved. Since the initial sentences of the passage include the main or controlling idea and the last sentence most likely includes the conclusion of the paragraph. Thus, the test developers should make sure that these parts of the passage are not mutilated (Birjandi et al, 2000:110).

Consequently, the first sentence in a passage is most probably the topic sentence and contains a maximum information load, it contributes to the understanding of the context, thus, one may conclude that the intactness would have a positive effect on test results. However, most EFL students who are regarded as LEP (Limited English Proficiency Students) cannot recover the impact of the context and have to focus on linguistic cues in the immediate environment of a missing word for filling the gap with an appropriate word. On this basis, the intactness should not play a crucial role in the results of a cloze test. Therefore, in the

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The Effect of First and Last Sentence Intactness on Cloze Results

چکیده

نظر به این که هر ساله عده‌ی زیادی از دانش‌آموزان دوره‌ی دبیرستان که در دانشگاه‌ها پذیرفته می‌شوند، در درس زبان انگلیسی، به ویژه در رابطه با آزمون‌های cloze با مشکل مواجهند، محققان این تحقیق بر آن شدند تا تأثیر دست نخوردگی متن در جملات اول و آخر متن انتخابی برای آزمون cloze را بررسی کنند. گفته می‌شود که در آزمون cloze، وجود جمله‌ی اول و آخر نقش به‌سزایی در درک مطلب و نحوه‌ی عملکرد آزمون‌دهندگان دارد. توجه این موضوع آن است که چون معمولاً در ابتدای هر پاراگراف، جمله‌ی اول موضوع و محتوای کلی متن را به تصویر می‌کشد و معمولاً ایده‌ی اصلی متن در این جمله بیان می‌شود، وجود جملات اول و آخر متن برای درک بهتر فراگیران زبان ضروری به نظر می‌رسد.

برای تحقیق این موضوع، عملکرد ۱۲۰ دانش‌آموز ایرانی در چهار نوع آزمون تکمیل متن (cloze) بررسی، و توانایی درک مطلب کلی فراگیران به وسیله‌ی بخش فرعی «آزمون نلسون» اندازه‌گیری شد. علاوه بر این، متنی تغییر یافته برگرفته از کتاب «A Basic Course in Reading English» و چهار نوع متن تغییر یافته‌ی دیگر به فراگیران مزبور داده شد.

نتایج تحقیق مؤید این فرضیه است که بدون در نظر گرفتن جملات اول و آخر متن، فراگیران عملکردی یکسان در پاسخ به انواع متفاوت آزمون تکمیل متن دارند. به عبارت دیگر، نتایج نشان داد که به نظر می‌رسد، وجود یا نبود جمله‌ی اول و آخر، تأثیری در نحوه‌ی عملکرد فراگیران زبان نداشته باشد. امید است نتایج تحقیق حاضر بتواند، برای دبیران محترم آموزش زبان انگلیسی زمینه‌ی لازم به منظور بهبود روایی و پایایی آزمون‌های cloze را فراهم سازد و در نتیجه بتوانند، در حد امکان اضطراب دانش‌آموزان و دانشجویان را در ارتباط با این نوع آزمون کاهش دهند.

کلید واژه‌ها: آزمون تکمیل متن، دست نخوردگی متن، متن تغییر یافته، عملکرد دانش‌آموزان روی زبان انگلیسی.

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of the presence or absence of first and last sentence intactness on the results obtained on a cloze test. To address this issue, performance of 120