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The Cloze Informal

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Ever since the inception of the cloze procedure relative to reading instruction (Taylor, 1953) much research has been conducted which suggests that implementation of this procedure is a valuable tool in evaluation of reading achievement (Jongsma 1971a). Cloze can serve as an adequate substitute for the valuable though cumbersome informal reading inventory to designate reading level (Alexander, 1968, Ransom, 1970). Further, cloze tests can be used in place of multiple-choice tests which can be time-consuming and difficult to construct (Rankin and Culhane, 1969). Valuable and extensive though the research has been, it is time for the cloze system to become more fully utilized within the classroom. The question, "How does one use the cloze procedure in the classroom?" does not necessarily require complex answers.

Introduction of cloze systems to young children inevitably presents problems. Primary school students generally work in materials over which they can respond accurately 80 or 90 or even 100 per cent of the time. Meeting success, of course, is highly desirable. Cloze work, on the other hand, can cause consternation among young children in that they frequently might feel that they are "wrong". It is, therefore, vital that children with whom the cloze procedure is used either as a teaching technique (Jongsma, 1971b) or as a testing method be familiar with the relative differences in response procedures between cloze systems and more conventional reading strategies. In other words, in working with cloze the student must have

an appreciation of success which is quantitatively different from that associated with more typical learning/teaching systems. Further, it appears entirely inadvisable to approach students with cloze for the first time using it as a method for evaluating achievement in reading. Before students begin using the cloze procedure as a method for evaluating reading achievement it is suggested that the procedure be first used as a teaching technique. For example, students could use passages from various materials over which deletions have been made and work in pairs and try to replace the missing words. Discussion could then follow relative to various responses made. In order to further instructional ends, modifications in using the technique could be used, such as the "maze" which offers the respondent a choice of responses (Guthrie, et al, 1974). The "zip" cloze variation involves use of an overhead transparency upon which deletions are made by covering portions of a selection with masking tape: possibilities for replacement words are discussed and the masking tape is eventually removed; thus the "zip" and immediate feedback (Blachowicz, 1977) .

Once the students have become familiar with the cloze technique, it can also be used efficiently to evaluate reading achievement. Researchers have suggested that standardized tests, although they have many useful purposes, tend to overestimate instructional level (Sipay, 1962; Davis, 1970). Consequently, it appears that reliance on grade equivalent scores derived from the administration of standardized tests

tends to place students in materials that are at frustration rather than instructional level. The best measure for placing students at an appropriate instructional level would be by using a well constructed informal reading inventory made over the materials intended for use in instruction (Beldin, 1969; Powell, 1968; Betts, 1967). As suggested earlier, utilization of the individually administered informal reading inventory is so time-consuming as to be impractical for use by a teacher with an entire classroom of children. Yet placement of students in materials at a level at which they can profit substantially from reading instruction is central to the process of reading instruction.

The concept of the cloze informal presents the possibility of determining appropriate instructional level for an entire class in an efficient manner. The cloze informal can be easily and comprehensively designed:

1. Locate selections within proposed instructional materials which appear to be representative of the content.
2. Select gradually lengthening passages at various levels which contain messages which, while not necessarily comprehensive, contain related thoughts.
3. Make cloze selections over the passages. Leave the first sentence intact. Starting with a randomly selected number from one to five, proceed to delete every fifth word in the remainder of the selection.
4. Prepare student response sheets. On a typed copy replace the deleted words with numbered blanks of uniform length. Beside the selection, list numbered blank spaces for students to enter responses.

Once a series of cloze passages has been obtained they can be administered to groups of students. For example, four selections ranging from primer to the 2² level could

be attempted by students at one sitting. Evaluation of results would indicate which students should continue with the cloze series. It is important to note that older and more capable students might perform badly at levels substantially below their achievement capabilities simply because of the sophistication of their language. Such happenings are to be overlooked while closer examination of performance on more difficult materials can yield valuable information. In order to facilitate scoring, only exact replacement responses are counted as correct. Errors in spelling can be overlooked provided that it is evident that the misspelling was an attempt at the correct word. Overall independent, instruction and frustration levels can be determined for each student based on Ransom's (1970) criteria:

50% = independent level
30—49% = instructional level
20—29% = probable frustration
below 20% = frustration level

However, Alexander (1968) concluded that ratios designating independent, instructional, and frustration levels might vary based on classroom experience.

Scores at various grade equivalents can be easily obtained and recorded for comparative purposes. The examiner can determine the relative degree of success at various levels of difficulty. Individual students' responses could also be examined to determine:

1. the relationship of responses made to the context of the message,
2. performance relative to the content of the selection,
3. spelling capabilities,
4. sense of grammatical usage.

The cloze informal can be readministered at a later time to determine advances made. Gains, or lack of them, could be observed at various levels of difficulty.

The cloze informal can be an evolving evaluation system. Passages can be easily replaced and/or

used interchangeably with other selections. Performance can be evaluated over content-oriented and narrative-type selections. The close informal offers a creative approach to evaluation of progress in reading which can be 1) accurate, 2) efficient, and 3) easily obtained.

FIGURE 1. A sample page from a series of cloze passages.

THE STORM (CLOZE 6)

In Livia visitors are usually most impressed by the beautiful coast of the kingdom. Surrounded by _____ mountains, people have lived _____ Livia for centuries, farming _____ fertile land and fishing _____ great ocean .One day _____ the history of Livia, _____ were dark clouds broken _____ and there were rays _____ sunlight. Before a storm _____ waves smash against rugged _____ along the coast as far as _____ eye can _____ the waves dance highly _____ the ocean displaying pure _____ crests. The soft wind _____ the sea was still _____ and gentle, not at _____ like the storm that _____ soon batter Livia. In _____ wind the morning call _____ sea gulls seemed to warn _____ the danger of the _____ storm that _____ soon batter Livia. sea would rise _____.

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