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Testing and Evaluation of Cloze Test among High School Students of Coimbatore

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Introduction

Language is a system. Each language has its own structure, its own system. The main objective of the teaching-learning of a living language – like English – is to help the learners to become able to use it to communicate with others, by sending and receiving meaningful messages. The objective of language teaching is not to ‘transmit’ the teacher’s superior understanding and appreciation of such texts to pupils; it is rather, to help them experience or ‘see for themselves’ the meanings. Teachers’ style is inevitably influenced by their attitudes and beliefs; the nature and role of knowledge, in the case of language learning, their view of language and the nature of learning and teaching. Having discussed in a general way the importance of textual materials to learners and teachers as well as some approaches to materials development, we will not focus on evaluating and testing materials and the various procedures for doing it. It should be clearly understood that evaluation of instructional materials is an important professional activity for all teachers. The process of evaluation involves measuring the suitability of a given set of materials to the stated objectives of a teaching programme.

Language Teaching

Language is an important tool of communication to express one’s ideas, views and feelings. Language teaching plays a vital role to open up its resources to the learner so that he or she may

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find the right words and sentences to convey the meaning intended. The teaching of language is by no means a recent or novel activity and there has always been a constant search for effective ways of optimizing learning. The goals of teaching the mother tongue or the first language are different from those of teaching of foreign language or a second language.

Purposes of Testing

There could be no science as we know it without measurement. Testing, including all forms of language testing, is one form of measurement. Just as we weigh potatoes, examine the length of a piece of cloth, count eggs in a carton, or check the volume of a container of milk, so we test reading comprehension or spelling to determine to what degree these abilities are present in the learner. There is potential for error when we weigh potatoes. For example, the scale might not work properly, or it may not be highly sensitive, so that we must settle for a rough estimate of the correct weight. Furthermore, the potatoes might be wet or dirty, or there might be a few yams mixed in. In either case our measurement may be incorrect.

In the same way, tests of language abilities may be inaccurate or unreliable in the sense that repeated measures may give different results. These measures may also be invalid in the sense that other abilities are mixed in. Our test of reading comprehension on closer examination may turn out to be a test of grammar or vocabulary, or at least a few such items may be 'mixed in'. Tests to be useful, must provide us with reliable and valid measurements for a variety of purposes (Grant Henning, 1987, pp.1)

Language Tests

The most common use of language tests and educational tests, in general, is to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in the learned abilities of the students. We may discover through testing that a given student has excellent pronunciation and fluency of oral production in the language of interest, but that he or she has a low of reading comprehension. On further testing, we might find that a low or too highly specialized vocabulary is a major factor underlying low reading comprehension for this student. We might recommend suitable approaches for vocabulary expansion. Testing and teaching are closely linked, and one can influence the other, either positively or negatively.

Procedures for Testing and Evaluation

A consideration of the purposes and types of tests is only preparatory to the selection or development of test for any stipulated use. To select and develop an appropriate test, one should take the following points for consideration (Grant Henning, 1977-*Testing and Evaluation*, pp.9-10)

1. Purpose of the Test
2. The characteristics of the examiners
3. Accuracy of measurement

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4. Suitability of format and features of the test
5. Development of sample
6. Availability of equivalent or equated forms
7. The nature of the scoring and reporting the scores
8. Procurement
9. Political acceptability
10. The cost

Types of Language Tests

Just as there are many purposes for which language tests are developed, so also there are many types of language tests. Some types of tests serve a varied of purposes while others are more restricted in their applicability. The following Tests are commonly used.

1. **OBJECTIVE TEST** – An objective test is one that can be scored with reference to a scoring key and therefore, does not require expert judgment in the scoring process. This is unlike a subjective test that depends on impression and opinion at the time of scoring. No particular knowledge or training in the examined content area is required on the part of the scorer.
2. **SUBJECTIVE TEST** – The subjective test is said to require scoring by opinionated judgment hopefully based on insight and expertise on the part of the scorer. No operational definitions of creativity provided to the scorer.
3. **DIRECT TEST** – The direct test is one that measures ability directly in authentic context and format, as opposed to an indirect test that requires performance of a contrived task from which inference is drawn about the presence of the ability concerned.
4. **INDIRECT TEST** – The indirect test is one that fosters inference about one kind of behaviour or performance through measurement of another kind of performance. An example would be the measurement of vocabulary use through a test of vocabulary recognition.
5. **DISCRETE POINT TEST** – The discrete point test as a variety of diagnostic tests, are designed to measure knowledge or performance in very restricted areas of target language (John Carrol, 1961). A discrete test is one that employs items measuring performance over a unitary set of linguistic structures or features. The correct usage of tense forms and prepositions in a cloze passage may be termed as discrete test.
6. **INTEGRATIVE TEST** – The integrative test is one that measures knowledge of a variety of language features, modes or skills simultaneously. An example would be dictation, which could be used to measure listening comprehension, spelling or general language proficiency.

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7. **APTITUDE TEST** – The aptitude test is designed to measure capability or potential, whether it is capability to succeed with an academic programme to learn a foreign language, to acquire a specific vocation or some other capability.
8. **ACHIEVEMENT TEST** – The achievement tests are used to measure the extent of learning in a prescribed content domain, often in accordance with explicitly stated objectives of a learning programme (Mehrens and Lehmann, 1975). An achievement test measures the extent of learning of the material presented in a particular course, text book, or programme of instruction.
9. **PROFICIENCY TEST** – The proficiency test measures general ability or skill, as opposed to an achievement test that measures the extent of learning of specific material presented in a particular course, text book, or programme of instruction.
10. **CLOZE TEST** – The cloze test is one that requires filling in the blanks in a passage from which there have been systematic or random deletions. Usually every fifth or seventh word has been removed from the passage beginning at a randomized starting point.
11. **SPEED TEST** – The speed test is one that limits time allowed for completion. So that the majority of examinees would not be expected to finish it. The material contained in the test usually goes easy that in given enough time, most persons would respond correctly.
12. **POWER TEST** – The power test is one that allows sufficient time for nearly all examinees to complete it, but which contains material of sufficient difficulty that it is not expected that a majority of examinees will get every item correct.

Evaluation

The evaluation is nothing but assessing the language competence and performance of the learner during the course or at the end of the course. Programme evaluation involves the evaluation of teaching methods, media of instruction, and language instructional materials in language education in addition to the learners' performance. Language tests are the measuring tools to assess the learners' achievement and therefore, they are administered to the learners and not to the materials or the methods or to the teachers. They are designed to measure the learner's knowledge of the language that is being learnt or his competence both grammatical and communicative in the target language of the competence of the learner is compared with the knowledge of others with a standard norm that may be fixed.

The result of the test shows measurement and that in itself does not have much meaning. But the inference or the conclusion that can be drawn from the measurement is more crucial and important that is what called the evaluation.

Evaluation is the qualitative and quantitative description of subjects. Evaluation totally involves quantitative description (i.e., behaviour described in terms of numbers) and qualitative

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description (i.e., Description expressed in words). The terms measurement and evaluation though poses distinctly different meanings are quite often confused and are frequently used interchangeably. Evaluation involves the interpretation of what is measured in addition to the description of behaviour in terms of numbers and words. Evaluation also includes value judgment about the thing described.

Processes of Evaluation

There are a number of processes in evaluation. They are listed and discussed briefly below:

1. Identification of course objectives (the expected or desired learning outcome)
2. Defining the objectives in terms of learner's terminating behaviour.
3. Constructing appropriate tools or instrument for measuring the behaviour
4. Applying or administering the tools/instruments and analyzing the results to determine the degree of learner's achievement in the instructional programme.

The above four steps are basically the same in the evaluation of instructions, curriculum or the programme as a whole. Both measurement and evaluation requires a broad variety of tools or instruments such as tests, rating scales, inventories, check lists, questionnaires, etc.

Qualitative Evaluation

The qualitative evaluation procedure might be portfolio evaluation. By this procedure a series of files might be centrally maintained for access of all teachers and supervisors concerned with the implementation of the language lesson. File folders might be organized according to lesson number, day or week of instruction, class sections, skill area, etc. Teachers or teacher aids might regularly record information such as student reactions to the lesson, appropriateness of length of materials, appropriateness of difficulty, interestingness of content, adequacy of organization and sequencing, sufficiency of student opportunity for practice, problems in implementation and suggestions for lesson improvement (Grant Henning, 1977 pp.186).

Quantitative Evaluation

The quantitative evaluation procedure might be the unmatched groups-t-test (A procedure to determine two groups by means of test results). By this procedure students are randomly assigned to one of two different instructional groups. Each group receives a different instructional treatment. This treatment may be a method of instruction, a set of course material, an incentive for achievement, and so on. Achievement or achievement gain is measured using the same instruments for both groups. Test score means and standard deviations are completed separately for each group. A t-value is computed and examined as an indication of the significance of the difference between the means for the two groups.

Types of Evaluation

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Evaluation in the content of language may be divided into two varieties. The types are:

- 1) Ongoing (or) Continuous Evaluation
- 2) Terminal Evaluation

1. ONGOING (or) CONTINUOUS EVALUATION

The ongoing (or) continuous evaluation is meant for getting the feedback regularly after the completion of every step during its process viz., planning, preparation, production and application. This would enable the programme to improve at various stages at that time of programme itself. This type of evaluation is more helpful to modify anything if necessary in the course of the didactic process.

2. TERMINAL EVALUATION

The terminal evaluation is a type of evaluation which is only made after the completion of the programme and it is used to know whether the programme is a success (or) failure. There is no other possibility in the result other than the above said two. This type of evaluation won't be used for any improvement during the programme.

The kinds of evaluation have been further classified into four categories. They are:

1. Formative evaluation
2. Summative evaluation
3. Brief evaluation
4. Extensive evaluation

1. FORMATIVE EVALUATION

The formative evaluation is a process of evaluation that is made from time to time in the case of an instructional programme and from one stage to the other in the case of methods or materials and does not provide a totalitarian impression of the quality either of the instructional programme the techniques and methods, materials or media.

2. SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

The summative evaluation is that kind of evaluation which takes into consideration the periodic evaluation that has been made and in addition to a total evaluation of the programme, process or product is made and the conclusions arrived at keeping in view the outcome of the periodic evaluation in addition to the final evaluation.

3. BRIEF EVALUATION

Evaluating a programme can also be made taking into account only some aspects and the evaluator can also give a judgement based on the few aspects chosen for evaluation. But it will be subjective and an impressionistic and not a realistic one. This can be useful to roughly compare two (or) more programmes.

4. EXTENSIVE EVALUATION

The extensive evaluation involves the analysis of a programme in all its main and sub aspects. The evaluator has to rate and weigh each of them individually and consolidate the total rating based on which he makes his value judgement. This is more objective and valid.

For this task of evaluating the procedures or methods, materials and media, etc. We need a monitoring device. That is to say that we should have a continuous or constant feedback about the effectiveness of the methods, materials and media.

Significance of the Study

Testing including all forms of language testing, is one form of measurement. Tests of language abilities may be inaccurate or unreliable in the sense that repeated measures may give different results. The most common use of language tests and educational tests in general, is to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in the learned abilities of the students. A consideration of the purposes and types of tests is only preparatory to the selection or development of test for any stipulated use.

The present paper aims at testing the Cloze Test abilities of high school students in English Language. The word **Cloze** means to complete a pattern. In cloze test, a passage may be given with blanks at regular intervals. This is a technique to measure reading comprehension and general language ability. This procedure originated in the 1950s as a means of assessing the difficulty level of a reading passage for native speakers.

The passage is followed by answer choices. Four or five choices may be given, of which the correct word has to be chosen to complete a sentence. This process is continued until all the blanks in the passage are filled up.

Quick reading will give a basic idea of the passage. The second reading should be accompanied with a reading of the options given after the passage. If the correct answer is not immediately apparent, check if the options fit in with the meaning and the structure of both the sentence and the passage. Eliminate choices that do not clearly fit in the sentence. Use discretion and judgment to choose the correct option from the remaining choices. For this study, 10 high school students were selected and they were asked to write the answers for Cloze Test passages within 30 minutes.

Objectives of the Study

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1. To find out the problems of students in learning the Cloze Test Comprehension
2. To find out the significant difference in achievement mean score between male students female students.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. The students have problems in learning the Cloze Test Comprehension.
2. There is no significant difference between male students and female students.

Limitations of the Study

The responsibility of the researcher is to see that the study is conducted with maximum care in order to be reliable. However the following delimitations could not be avoided in the present study.

1. The study is confined to 30 students of standard IX studying in St. John Bosco Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Coimbatore.
2. The study included Cloze Test alone and was limited to one topic in the same.
3. The study is confined to matriculation students only.
4. The study is confined to Cloze Test in the subject of English only.
- 5.

Method of Study

The investigator selected the convenient sampling method to test the effectiveness of reading comprehension in enhancing achievement in Cloze Test at standard IX. Qualitative approach was espoused in the study.

Sample Selected for the Study

Thirty students of Standard IX studying in St. John Bosco Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Coimbatore were taken for the study.

Variables

The independent variables namely the achievement test and sex and the dependent variable namely achievement score were used in this study.

Tools Used for the Study

The researcher made use of self-made achievement test as the tool for conducting the study.

Reliability

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If test scores are consistent, that is, very nearly the same, when a group takes a test on two different days, the test is reliable. A test is reliable if it can be repeated with a similar data set and yields a similar outcome. The expectation of a good research is that it would be reliable. It refers to the trustworthiness or consistency of measurement of a tool whatever it measures.

Validity

A test which is ideal for measuring a particular type of language skill may be useless when it is used to measure some other skill. A test is valid when it measures what it sets out to measure. The concept of validity is fundamental to a research result. A result is internally valid if an appropriate methodology has been followed in order to yield that result. A test is said to be valid if it measures what it intends to measure.

Data Collection

The researcher initially gathered information from schools regarding the availability of students of standard IX studying in the school. On the basis of the above criteria few schools in the locality were selected. The researcher approached the principal of St. John Bosco Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Coimbatore. The researcher was given permission for conducting the study in the school. A total of 30 students were selected as the sample for the study.

Analysis and Interpretation

Under this cloze item type, two types of scoring procedures are used: the exact word method where the exact word used in the original text must be supplied and the appropriate or acceptable word method where the testee can supply any word which is acceptable or appropriate. Quite often, a cloze passage has provision for both the above scoring procedures, the exact words fitting into function gaps (conjunctions, prepositions and articles), and the appropriate words fitting into semantic gaps (nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs).

The researcher used descriptive analysis for analyzing the data. The “t” test was used to find the significant difference between the mean scores of male students and female students of variables selected for the study.

Alternative Hypothesis: 1

The students of standard IX have problems in learning Cloze Test Comprehension.

Null Hypothesis: 2

There is no significant difference in achievement mean scores between the male students and female students of standard IX.

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Findings of the Study

The following findings were drawn by the survey:

1. Students found difficulties in answering the questions because they did not have adequate reading comprehension as well general language skills.
2. Many students did not know the synonyms for many words.
3. Some students misunderstood the meaning of the passage.

Conclusion

Research in any area is only a humble beginning to explore its nuances. Cloze Test Comprehension learning in Indian schools is fairly a new area and its full potential is yet to be realized in the field of Language Teaching. Testing and Evaluation, in one sense, is, at best, a formal exercise and may not finally establish the usefulness of the materials. The ultimate test can take place only in the classroom with real learners. Only then can the feedback be authentic.

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