

CLOZE PASSAGE IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION

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ABSTRACT

Using an effective practice of comprehending English text is another effort to improve reading comprehension of EFL students, especially the Indonesian students. Thus, this study aims to see whether there is a difference in performance when students practice regularly with cloze passages and practice with passage in full but followed by carefully written comprehension questions. Regarding the purpose of the research, an experimental research is used where thirteen pairs of students from two groups are observed. The data are collected from pre-test and post-test. Quantitative data obtained is statistically analyzed and then compares by using t-test with paired sample statistics. The result of the study reveals that Students treated by cloze passages significantly better than students treated by full passages in terms of reading comprehension ability. It is evidently clear that cloze is an essential teaching technique that fosters reading comprehension. Therefore, it is recommended that

Keywords: Cloze Passage and Reading Comprehension

A.INTRODUCTION

Dreyer (1998:18) claims that reading is the most important skill for second language learners in academic contexts. Furthermore, Campbell (1995) adds that reading is the most is useful skill for foreign language learners since a reading skill mastery is the key for a successfull academic life, a widen horizon, and an access to new knowledge and information. Therefore, it can be concluded that reading is not only important in developing language intuition and determining academic success but also it is important for completing certain task.

However, since English in Indonesia is a foreign language, most students at any level of education get difficulty in reading English text. Many research results (Wallace, 1992, 2001; Wahyuni, 2000; Li Juan, 2007) indicated that most students are not able to read English with complete comprehension. Thus, the students need help in reading comprehension.

Using an effective practice of comprehending English text is another effort to improve reading comprehension of EFL students, especially the Indonesian students. Rye(1982:50) points out that cloze procedure develops reading abilities. He cites the authors of the manual for the Edinburgh Reading Test (1977) who argue that when facing a cloze passage, students will employ the reading skills of searching for information from the surrounding syntactic and semantic circumstance, re-reading the whole passage (not necessarily following the order of the author's sequence), looking for clues that their memory tells them are present, and looking for material that may

provide a basis for a guess. With this regard, Gunning (1998:347) concludes that cloze is an essential teaching technique that fosters reading for meaning and use of context, especially effective for students who fail to read for meaning.

Considering the importance of cloze passages in teaching reading, this study aims to see whether there is a difference in performance when students practice regularly with cloze passages and practice with passage in full but followed by carefully written comprehension questions.

B.LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Cloze Procedure as Test of Reading skills

Cloze tests have been widely used in language assessment, particularly for the assessment of reading skills in language tests, both in classroom and in standardized tests. Moreover, cloze tests have been shown, according to Oller (1973: 106) to be the best indicator of reading ability. It is believed that cloze tests are more efficient and reliable than reading comprehension test which use open-ended questions or short answers because they are easier to evaluate and do not, as in many reading comprehension tests, depend on long written answers to evaluate.

The aim of cloze tests is to evaluate readability and reading comprehension (Heaton, 1991). To fill in the gaps correctly, students must have a good grasp of the meaning of the text as a whole. It indicates that performances on the cloze procedure reflect the learner's ability to use the language context (Rye, 1982:53) reflect learners' success in reading (Scholars, 1987). Thus, the reader's success in supplying the deleted words is an index of his/her ability to comprehend the reading matter (Daines, 1982:52). In other words, cloze passage can be used to assess reading comprehension Yamashita (2003:285).

Furthermore, cloze procedure is also used to assess reading strategies used by readers or to develop learners' reading strategies. Because some words are deleted, cloze forces readers to be more aware of the meaning and calls for the use of reading skills like scanning and searching that are often neglected in second language reading (Steinman, 2002:291). In addition, Ahluwalia (1992:82) considers the process of taking a cloze test as involving more active reading rather than passive reading and readers should be more conscious of their reading strategies during this process. This means that the use of cloze procedure as part of English tests is intended to check students' global language proficiency, including the ability to use reading skills and strategies for dealing with passages with information gaps.

2. Cloze Passage and Reading Comprehension

According to Rye (1982:47-48), cloze procedure has also been used to help learners improve their reading ability in many studies. Many researchers and teachers have used it successfully in improving learners' reading ability.

The processes involved in comprehending the text in some ways similar to the processes involved in completing cloze deletions. According to Rye (1982:7), when completing a cloze deletion the reader samples the context information, constructs a response and then checks the response with the available context information. This indicates that reading requires learners to utilize clues available in language, and cloze procedure requires a similar ability (Rye, 1982:75).

Shortly stated, cloze passage helps readers to predict and provides practice in guessing meaning from context. Guessing meaning from context is an important reading strategy. Van Parreren and Schouten-Van Parreren (1981) have found that guessing meaning from context is a trainable reader strategy in spite of its variability. In other words, teaching cloze strategies is, in effect, teaching reading strategies. Moreover, because some words are deleted, cloze forces readers to be more aware of the meaning and calls for the use of reading skills like scanning and searching that are often neglected in second language reading that cloze procedure can also used to develop learners' reading strategies (Steinman, 2002:292-293).

Based on the description above, it can be inferred that the processes involved in completing cloze passage include the use of reading strategies such as previewing (read the whole text before starting the cloze test), predicting (activate background knowledge to make a guess about the information contained in the text), using context clues about the deleted word in the surrounding context, using language knowledge to select appropriate lexical items and proper grammar forms for the gap.

3. How to Create Cloze Passage

Cloze passages consist of at least one paragraph. Basically, the process of deleting words to create a cloze test can be classified in two ways. The first method is known as fixed ratio deletion or nth word deletion, which means that every nth word is omitted (every fifth word or every seventh word, etc) and a blank line is put in its place. The second method is known as rational deletion, in which the test constructor deletes words based on some rational decision. The process can also be referred to as selected deletion.

There are two issues that need to be considered by the teacher when selecting a text for the cloze procedure. Firstly, the text should be worth reading and should contain material of value to the students. Secondly, the text should be suitable in terms of language difficulty. It is due to the nature of the text such as its difficulty level would improve or hamper cloze performance (Ahluwalia, 1992:86-88).

In addition, cloze exercises require careful preparation. The teacher sequences and selects the form of these deletions. The sequencing should begin with the rational deletion of one out of ten words and slowly progress to one out of five words. Rye (1982) argues that the word to be deleted must be predictable and related to the purposes of instruction. More frequent structure words are easier to predict than content words. Beginning deletions should therefore be predominantly structure words.

C.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.Research Design

This study is experimental research where thirteen pairs of students from two groups are observed. The t-test with paired samples statistic is used in order to see whether there is a difference in performance when students practice regularly with cloze passages and practice with passage in full but followed by carefully written comprehension questions. The grand design is formulated in table below.

Table 1
The Grand Design

Class	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
G1	T1	X1	T2
G2	T1	X2	T2

G1 refers to experimental while G2 refers to the control group from class C of English Department of the same College. The students from each class that have the same scores at the pre-test are paired as they are assumed to have same capability. T1 is the pre-test, T2 is the post-test. The same material is used as a pre-test and also as a post-test. The pre-test is carried out to investigate the students' ability before the treatment is given while the post-test is meant to see the students' reading comprehension ability after being treated. Then, the post test scores of the experimental group are compared to the post-test scores of the control group.

X1 is the treatment given to the experimental group, in which the use of cloze passage is implemented in the class. While, X2 is the teaching reading process with full passage carried out in the control group class.

2. Sample and Population

Research population in this study is the first semester students of STKIP Siliwangi Bandung from English Department in year 2011/2012. The sample of this study is twenty six students from two classes who are taking Reading for General Communication subject. Thirteen students are chosen from class B which belongs to experimental group and another thirteen students of class C which belong to the control group. The students are paired based on the pre-test result.

3. Instrumentations

To assess and compare the subjects' reading ability before and after the treatment, some passages taken from "A Reading Skills Book" written by Elaine Kirn and Pamela Hartmann published by McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. were used.

Three cloze passages were developed to be used for 3 sessions, one passage per session, in the experimental group. The students were first given time to complete the related cloze passage in each session. Then, the teacher checked their answers and supplied them with some explanation. The students in the control group received the same three passages but in full form. Each passage was followed by carefully written comprehension questions. The students read the passages and answered the questions. Their answers to the questions were checked by the teacher; the students were furnished with explanation whenever deemed necessary by the teacher. The test consists of comprehension questions in form of multiple choices.

4. Data Collection

The data obtained through the tests. The tests are usually the same, but they are used two times (pre-test and post-test). Pre-test is given on November, 15th 2011. The result of the pre-test is intended to find out the students' capability in reading before they are treated. Furthermore, it is also used to match the students of experimental group who obtain the same score with those of the control group.

The week after the pre-test was given. The students of the experimental group were given the cloze passages. There were three passages which dealing with workahollism, indoor air pollution and banking on the poor. Then, the post-test were given to both group on December, 13th 2011. Post-test result of the paired students were then compared to see the achievement of students of experimental group's after being treated with cloze passage.

5.Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained is statistically analyzed and then compares by using t-test with paired sample statistics. It is aimed at finding out the difference between the experimental group who is treated with cloze passages and control group who are treated with full passages. The matched t-test is used to find the performance of the students prior and after the treatment. Hatch and Lazarton (1991: 287) state that this is a procedure that tests the pairs of students who have the same score on the examination. This statistical analysis is intended to find out whether the means of the two groups are significantly different in terms of students' ability in reading comprehension.

The standard error of difference between means is the number of pairs minus one.

Df= npairs-1

The t-test formula is:

$$T = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{SD}$$

The standard error means are from the matched pairs so the symbol SD is used. The formula for this is:

$$SD = \frac{SD}{\sqrt{n}}$$

The formula to find SD is:

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{\sum D^2 - (1 \div n)(\sum D)^2}{n-1}}$$

In the formula n is the number of pairs, thus, the standard deviation of the differences is adjusted for the number of pairs.

To check the difference between the two means to find the observed value, the formula below is used:

$$T_{obs} = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{SD}$$

Finally, the last step is to check this value against the t critical value in the t distribution table. To see the difference significant index, this study followed the criteria that if the significant index > 0.05, it means that the hypothesis is accepted which means that there is no significant correlation between treatment and the students' achievement in their reading comprehension. On the contrary, if the significant index < 0.05, the hypothesis is rejected which means that there is a correlation between the treatment and the students' achievement in their reading comprehension.

D.FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study was conducted by giving the pre-test to both control and experimental groups. The test given was made by the researcher. There are 27 students of class B and 29 students of class C, but only 26 students from class B and 27 students from class C that followed the pre-test. The result of the tests can be seen in the table below:

Table 2
The Result of Post Test

The Pretest Scores of Class B
C

(Experimental Group)

No	Student	Score
1	S1	65
2	S2	47
3	S3	-
4	S4	68
5	S5	67
6	S6	60
7	S7	63
8	S8	33
9	S9	61
10	S10	52
11	S11	57
12	S12	69
13	S13	45
14	S14	70
15	S15	64
16	S16	45
17	S17	66
18	S18	72
19	S19	41
20	S20	63
21	S21	38
22	S22	37
23	S23	41
24	S24	35
25	S25	43
26	S26	-
27	S27	31

The Pretest Scores of Class

(Control Group)

No	Student	Score
1	S1	57
2	S2	67
3	S3	70
4	S4	72
5	S5	51
6	S6	50
7	S7	54
8	S8	46
9	S9	61
10	S10	66
11	S11	34
12	S12	58
13	S13	-
14	S14	41
15	S15	60
16	S16	32
17	S17	50
18	S18	42
19	S19	63
20	S20	65
21	S21	62
22	S22	69
23	S23	40
24	S24	39
25	S25	45
26	S26	36
27	S27	31
28	S28	68
29	S29	44

The students from the experimental group who got the same pre-test scores with those from the control group were paired. There were thirteen pairs of students from both

classes (each pairs of students got the same pre-test score). It means that twenty six students are chosen as the sampling data. The thirteen pairs of students and their scores are presented in the table. 2. It was done to get the same mean in order to compare the post test scores of the experimental group with those of the control group. Therefore, the sig. (2 tailed) was acquired and the correlation was revealed.

After the pre-test had been given to both groups, the discussion on cloze passage was conducted in experimental group's class and full passages were given to the control group for three weeks. After all materials had been discussed, both groups were given the same test as the pre-test which act as the post-test

Table 3
The Result of Post Test

The Post-test Scores of Experimental Group
Control Group

No	Student	Score
1	S1	66
2	S2	66
3	S3	70
4	S4	76
5	S5	79
6	S6	62
7	S7	64
8	S8	36
9	S9	60
10	S10	64
11	S11	66
12	S12	68
13	S13	52
14	S14	74
15	S15	66
16	S16	48
17	S17	70
18	S18	82
19	S19	68
20	S20	56
21	S21	80
22	S22	30
23	S23	46
24	S24	34
25	S25	64
26	S26	66
27	S27	43

The Post-test Scores of

No	Student	Score
1	S1	60
2	S2	70
3	S3	72
4	S4	76
5	S5	55
6	S6	48
7	S7	54
8	S8	63
9	S9	62
10	S10	61
11	S11	55
12	S12	67
13	S13	59
14	S14	48
15	S15	62
16	S16	41
17	S17	52
18	S18	62
19	S19	59
20	S20	66
21	S21	60
22	S22	64
23	S23	59
24	S24	63
25	S25	48
26	S26	50
27	S27	35
28	S28	65
29	S29	51

The thirteen pairs of students and their scores taken as samples of the study as depicted in the table 4.

Table 4
Paired Student Score

No	Paired students	Score		
		Pre-test	Experiment Post-test	Control Post test
1	P1	65	66	66
2	P2	68	76	65
3	P3	67	79	70
4	P4	60	62	62
5	P5	63	64	59
6	P6	61	60	62
7	P7	69	68	64
8	P8	45	52	48
9	P9	70	74	72
10	P10	66	70	61
11	P11	72	82	76
12	P12	41	46	48
13	P13	31	43	35

The data in the table 4 was analyzed by using t-test with paired sample statistics. It was intended to find the significant difference between the experimental group who was treated with cloze passages and control group who was treated with full passages. To give a clear picture of the result of computation.

Table.5
Paired Sample Test

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Tobs	df
Experimental Post test Control Post-test	62.69	4.54	1.26	3.301	12

The means of the post-test score of both groups is 62.69. Df which is acquired by subtracting the number pairs of students involves in this study minus one, that is 12. We can also find standard deviation which is 4.54 and its value of t is 3.301. The table has evidently shown that there are the significant differences between the groups. The difference is significant at the 0.05 level. The critical value of t is 2.262. Since the t value of the computation is 3.301 which exceeds 2.262, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Null hypotheses of no difference between the post-test result of the experimental group and control group is rejected since the treatment does have an effect on the performance. Students treated by cloze passages significantly better than students treated by full passages in terms of reading comprehension ability. Therefore, it is

evidently clear that cloze is an essential teaching technique that fosters reading for meaning and use of context, especially effective for students who fail to read for meaning (Gunning, 1998:347).

E.CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

From the analysis and findings of this research, it is evident that students treated by cloze passages significantly better than students treated by full passages in terms of reading comprehension ability. The statistical computation shows that scores of the experimental group treated with cloze passage is significantly higher than the scores of the control group treated with full passage. Accordingly, cloze passages need to be provided in teaching reading. However, in this case, teachers need to consider the ways in which they deal with cloze texts in the attempt to make cloze passage effective.

Therefore, it is suggested that in selecting cloze passage, the instruction need to be carefully sequenced in length and difficulty, and adjusted to the reading abilities of the students as recommended by Rye (1982:48).

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