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University for Teacher Education
The English Language Department

**Modularity of Reading Comprehension In
Multiple-Choice Cloze Procedure and
Reliability Fluctuation**

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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By

ABUTALEB IRANMEHR

ADVISOR

Dr. H. Vossoughi

READER

Ms. T. Saetti

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University for Teacher Education
Department of Foreign Languages

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We Hereby Recommend That This Thesis

By

ABUTALEB IRANMEHR

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Committee on oral Examination:


..... Dr. H. Vossoughi
Advisor


..... MS. T. Saetti
Reader



..... Dr. M.H. Keshavarz
(Chairman of the English Department)

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TO MY FATHER

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AND MY WIFE

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ABSTRACT

Modularity of Reading Comprehension in Multiple-choice Cloze Procedure and Reliability Fluctuation

In its various forms "nothing" has captured the attention of scientists, scholars, and others for centuries. Also, there is an old belief that nature abhors a vacuum. Jonathan Swift wrote: "So geographers, in africa maps, with savage pictures fill their gaps/and o'er uninhabitable downs/place elephants for want of towns." Gap filling, then, seems to be one common response to absence and nonoccurrence. Cloze procedure is one important example of "nothing" and gap-filling.

Reading comprehension plays an important role in the process of foreign language learning. Research documents indicate that a reader's background knowledge affects the information recalled from a text (Carrell, 1980, 1987).

Titles, prefaces, and pictures form three kinds of prereading paratext which may facilitate comprehension and recall through providing a reader with a background knowledge (Arnold and Broons, 1976; Peeck, 1974; Harris et al. 1980). However, their effects are argued to be specific to their types, the manner of

their presentation, the nature of the text, the particular reading task, etc.

Data from a wide variety of sources are cited in support of the cloze technique as a global measure of language proficiency. In spite of the increasing optimism regarding the usefulness of the cloze procedure, a number of significant questions remain to be answered. For instance, the reliability and validity of cloze test have been theoretically called into question.

The experiments also indicate that comprehension and recall of a passage such as cloze is significantly better when provided with a clear title (topic). This has been considered to have affected the degrees of completing the phases of reading comprehension with the activation of the different modules in view, i.e. Lexical Module, Syntactic Module, Interpretative Module, etc.

Based on different theories and views regarding the cloze procedure, a research has been conducted to answer two questions running thus:

1. Is performance on multiple-choice cloze tests modularized?
2. Does providing the title boost and complete the phase of modularization culminating in a mental representation of the concept residing in the reading passage?

3. Does furnishing the title enhance cloze reliability?
4. Does providing the discourse topic (title) of cloze passage contribute to the formation of "conceptual representation" leading to an increase in cloze performance?

Concerning the four above-stated research questions, the four following null hypotheses were, then, proposed:

H₀ 1- Performance on multiple-choice cloze tests is not modularized.

H₀ 2- Providing the title has no effect on the mental representation of the concept residing in the reading passage.

H₀ 3- There will be no significant difference between the reliability of a multiple-choice cloze test having title and that of the one without title.

H₀ 4- There will be no significant difference between the mean score of a group taking a multiple-choice cloze test with that of a group taking a multiple-choice cloze test without title (passage unchanged).

The instruments included: a) a cloze test with title (T-cloze) b) a cloze without title (N-T Cloze) c) a TOEFL test as a tool for correlational analyses and factor-analytic studies d) a Nelson Test (450) e) A summary protocol added to the cloze tests to gauge the existence and formation of a "mental or conceptual

representation."

To compare the mean scores in the fourth experiment a t-test was conducted. The results revealed that the t-values for both hypotheses were far below the critical t, which was 1.98 at the .05 level of significance with 95 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the first part of both null hypotheses were retained.

To compare the reliability coefficients it was necessary to convert the reliability coefficients into Z by the application of Z transformation (for uncorrelated samples). The results led to the confirmation of the second third hypothesis and the rejection of the null second hypothesis.

Nevertheless, the comparison of the performance of the students on the last item, i.e. a summary protocol, indicated a significant difference triggered by the title (in T-cloze test).

Chapter I

Introduction

Background and purpose

For many students of a foreign language, reading skill is the most important one of the four language skills. Certainly, considering the study of English as a foreign language all over the world, reading is the main reason why students learn the language (Carrell, 1988).

Specially, reading for comprehension plays an important role in the process of foreign language learning. Although current theories of foreign language learning do not agree upon specifics, all take into account the role of comprehension in the processing, storage and recall of linguistic input, and its impact on the development of a learner's foreign language.

In the last two decades, the accepted theory of EFL reading has changed dramatically from a bottom-up model, a decoding process of reconstructing the author's intended meaning via decoding individual linguistic units from the small units to the largest, to a top-down model which conceptualizes

the reading process as one in which stages which are higher up and at the end of the information-processing sequence interact with stages which occur earlier in the sequence.

On account of the fact that reading is a complex process, many researchers try to understand and explain the reading process by analyzing the process into a set of component skills (e.g. Carpenter and Just, 1986; Carr and Levy, 1990; Haynes and Carr, 1991). The attempt to subdividing reading into component skills has lead researchers to put forward at least six general component skills and knowledge areas (Grabe, 1991):

1. Automatic recognition skills
2. Vocabulary and structural knowledge
3. Formal discourse structure knowledge
4. Content / world background knowledge
5. Synthesis and evaluation skills / strategies
6. Metacognitive knowledge and skill monitoring

Readers need a good knowledge of formal discourse structure (formal schemata). Several studies have shown the effects of formal, rhetorical schemata in EFL/ESL. Content and background knowledge (content schemata) also has a major influence on reading comprehension. A large body of literature has attested to the strong effects of prior knowledge of text-related information on reading comprehension (Anderson and Pearson, 1984; Bransford, Stein, and Shelton, 1984, Wilson and Anderson, 1986).

Reading is a complex communication process in which the mind of the reader interacts with the text in a particular setting or context. During the text reading process, readers construct a meaningful representation of text through an interaction of their conceptual and linguistic knowledge with the cues that are in the text.

According to Goodman (1976) reading is a "Psycholinguistic guessing game". He states, "Reading is a selective process. It