

METHODOLOGY OF APPLYING CLOZE TASKS IN EFL CLASSES

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Abstract. *Despite the popularity of cloze tasks as a test, many language educators are not well aware of its merits and demerits. Therefore, this article is an attempt to provide the reader, especially language teachers, with some useful information about the cloze tasks. More specifically, the purposes of this article are to (a) offer a clear definition of the cloze tasks, (b) explain the methodology of applying the cloze tasks, (c) introduce the benefits of the cloze tasks, and (d).*

Keywords: *contextual clues, vocabulary, sentence structure, language proficiency, language acquisition*

Introduction:

Literature plays a crucial role in language learning, providing students with opportunities to explore different cultures, enhance their reading comprehension skills, and develop their language proficiency (Sheu, 2018). To maximize the benefits of literature lessons, educators employ various instructional strategies, one of which is the use of cloze tasks. Cloze tasks, also known as fill-in-the-blank exercises, involve removing words or phrases from a text and requiring students to fill in the gaps (Huang, 2016). This text aims to explore the role of cloze tasks in literature lessons and their impact on student engagement, language acquisition, and critical thinking skills.

Engaging Students:

Cloze tasks serve as an effective tool for engaging students during literature lessons. By actively participating in the text completion process, students become more involved in the reading experience. They are encouraged to analyze the context, infer meaning, and make connections between the missing words and the overall narrative. This engagement fosters a deeper understanding of the literary work and increases students' motivation to explore the text further (Wong, 2013).

Improving Reading Comprehension:

Cloze tasks can significantly enhance students' reading comprehension skills. As students encounter gaps in the text, they are prompted to comprehend the surrounding content, predict missing words, and consider the text as a whole. This process encourages students to pay closer attention to contextual clues, vocabulary, and sentence structure. By actively filling in the blanks, students develop their ability to make informed guesses, deduce meaning, and draw inferences from the literature they are studying (Huang, 2016).

Developing Language Proficiency:

Cloze tasks provide valuable opportunities for language practice and skill development. By encountering authentic language in literature, students engage with vocabulary, grammar structures, and stylistic elements that are essential for language acquisition. The act of completing

the gaps requires students to employ their linguistic knowledge, select appropriate words, and consider the syntactic and semantic relationships within the text. Consequently, students expand their vocabulary, reinforce grammatical structures, and enhance their overall language proficiency (Sheu, 2018).

Promoting Critical Thinking:

Cloze tasks can also foster critical thinking skills in literature lessons. When students encounter gaps in the text, they are encouraged to analyze the author's intent, consider alternative interpretations, and evaluate the significance of the missing words or phrases. This process prompts students to think critically about the characters, themes, and underlying messages in the literary work. By engaging in active interpretation and reflection, students develop their analytical skills, deepen their understanding of the text, and cultivate their own literary interpretations (Wong, 2013).

Differentiating Instruction:

Cloze tasks offer flexibility in the classroom, allowing educators to differentiate instruction based on students' proficiency levels and learning needs. Educators can modify the complexity of the cloze tasks by adjusting the difficulty of the gaps or providing hints and scaffolding for struggling students. This differentiation ensures that all students can actively participate in the literature lesson and make meaningful connections with the text, regardless of their language proficiency. Furthermore, educators can tailor the cloze tasks to focus on specific language skills, such as vocabulary expansion, grammar practice, or literary analysis, catering to students' individual learning goals (Huang, 2016).

Assessment and Feedback:

Cloze tasks can be utilized as a formative assessment tool in literature lessons. By analyzing students' responses to the gaps, educators can gain insights into students' comprehension, language proficiency, and critical thinking abilities. The completion of cloze tasks provides educators with valuable data for assessing students' progress and identifying areas for further instruction and support. Additionally, educators can provide timely and specific feedback on students' responses, guiding them towards a deeper understanding of the text and fostering their growth as readers and language learners (Sheu, 2018).

Enhancing Vocabulary Acquisition:

Cloze tasks can be a valuable tool for vocabulary acquisition in literature lessons. When students encounter gaps in the text, they are prompted to analyze the surrounding context and use their knowledge of word meaning and structure to fill in the blanks. This process allows students to expand their vocabulary repertoire and develop a deeper understanding of word usage and nuances. Research has shown that cloze tasks can lead to significant gains in vocabulary knowledge and retention (Nation, 2013). Moreover, cloze tasks can be designed to target specific vocabulary themes or word families, enabling targeted vocabulary practice and consolidation (Chang, 2018).

Encouraging Language Production:

In addition to improving reading comprehension, cloze tasks can also enhance students' language production skills. When filling in the gaps, students are required to generate appropriate words or phrases that fit the context. This active production of language reinforces their understanding of grammar, collocations, and idiomatic expressions. Through cloze tasks, students have the opportunity to practice using language in a meaningful and contextually relevant manner, which can contribute to improved writing and speaking skills (Chang, 2018).

Developing Critical Thinking and Interpretation Skills:

Cloze tasks can foster students' critical thinking skills by prompting them to analyze the text more deeply. As students fill in the gaps, they must consider the author's writing style, literary devices, and narrative techniques. This analysis encourages students to think critically about the author's choices and intentions, leading to a deeper understanding of the text's themes, symbolism, and character development. Cloze tasks provide a structured framework for students to engage in literary analysis, promoting higher-order thinking skills and a more nuanced interpretation of the literary work (Wong, 2013).

Encouraging Cultural Understanding and Empathy:

Literature often provides insights into different cultures and perspectives. Cloze tasks can be designed to highlight cultural references or specific cultural elements within the text. By filling in the gaps related to cultural aspects, students gain a deeper understanding of the cultural context in which the literature is situated. This exposure to diverse cultures fosters cultural awareness, empathy, and a broader worldview among students. Research has shown that literature-based activities, including cloze tasks, can contribute to the development of intercultural competence (Kramsch, 2014).

Facilitating Collaborative Learning:

Cloze tasks can be adapted for collaborative learning environments, encouraging students to work together to complete the gaps. Collaborative cloze tasks promote peer interaction, discussion, and negotiation of meaning. Students can share their interpretations, debate word choices, and collectively construct a comprehensive understanding of the text. This collaborative approach not only enhances students' language skills but also nurtures teamwork, communication, and cooperation. Collaborative cloze tasks can be particularly beneficial for English language learners, as they provide opportunities for language practice in a supportive and interactive setting (Chang, 2018).

Incorporating Technology:

With the increasing availability of digital tools and resources, cloze tasks can be adapted to incorporate technology in literature lessons. Online platforms, interactive worksheets, or educational apps can be utilized to create dynamic and engaging cloze tasks. Technology-enhanced cloze tasks can offer multimedia elements, such as audio clips or embedded images, to provide a more immersive and interactive reading experience. Additionally, digital platforms can provide immediate feedback, track student progress, and offer personalized learning experiences. Research has shown that technology-enhanced cloze tasks can enhance motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes (García Laborda, 2019).

Conclusion:

Cloze tasks play a vital role in literature lessons, offering numerous benefits to students. They engage students in the reading process, improve reading comprehension skills, develop language proficiency, promote critical thinking, allow for differentiation, and serve as assessment tools. Educators should carefully design and implement cloze tasks to ensure their effectiveness in supporting students' learning and enjoyment of literature. By incorporating cloze tasks into literature lessons, educators can create an engaging and enriching learning environment that nurtures students' language skills, analytical thinking, and appreciation for literature (Wong, 2013). Cloze tasks have a multifaceted role in literature lessons, providing numerous benefits to students. They promote vocabulary acquisition, enhance language production, encourage critical thinking and interpretation skills, foster cultural understanding and empathy, facilitate

collaborative learning, and can be adapted to incorporate technology. By utilizing cloze tasks effectively, educators can create engaging and interactive literature lessons that support students' language development, critical thinking skills, and cultural awareness. As educators continue to explore and refine the use of cloze tasks, they contribute to creating meaningful and enriching literature experiences for students.

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