

*The Use of a Cloze Test as a Measure of  
English Proficiency for Thai University Graduates*

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**1. Introduction**

Within the past decade, the cloze procedure has become a possible measure of English language proficiency for non-native speakers of English. Cloze tests have been reported to be valid and reliable English proficiency tests that can be easily constructed and used by many researchers (Oller, 1973; Stubbs and Tucker, 1974; Aitken, 1977). The cloze procedure was first introduced in 1953 by Wilson Taylor and it was regarded as a new and better way of determining the "readability" of printed English prose. A cloze test can be presented in many different ways, that is, a cloze passage can use different deletion criteria. Oller (1979) mentions two commonly used methods: a fixed-ratio method which is constructed by deleting every  $n^{\text{th}}$  word of a passage, and a rational or variable-ratio method which is constructed by deleting only words selected on some other basis.

A great deal of research has been done on the validity of the cloze procedure as a measure of overall language proficiency for nonnative speakers of English. Oller and Conrad (1971) reported several high correlations between the score of a cloze test and the scores of the subtests of the UCLA ESL Placement Examination (Vocabulary,  $r = .59$ ; Reading Comprehension,  $r = .80$ ; Grammar,  $r = .58$ ; Dictation,  $r = .82$ , and Article Usage,  $r = .33$ ). Stubbs and Tucker (1974) also obtained a high correlation between a cloze test and the English Entrance Examination (EEE) of the American University of Beirut. They found a high correlation ( $r = .71$ ) between the cloze-exact scores and the total EEE scores and between the cloze-acceptable scores and the total EEE scores ( $r = .76$ ). Brière and Hinofotis (1979) also found the high correlation between a cloze test and the UCLA Placement Examination ( $r = .83$ ) and the USC Placement Examination ( $r = .78$ ) and with the

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SIU Placement Examination ( $r = .80$ ). Prappal (1982) investigated the relationships of different English language tests : the CULI Achievement Tests, the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency and two cloze tests, which were taken by Thai university students. She found that the cloze tests correlated highly with both the subparts of the CULI Achievement Tests (Reading,  $r = .68$  ; and Listening,  $r = .65$ ), with the subparts of the Michigan Test (Structure,  $r = .65$  ; Vocabulary,  $r = .51$  ; Reading Comprehension,  $r = .48$ ) and with the total scores of the Michigan Test ( $r = .68$ ). The result of these studies seem to support the use of cloze procedure as an overall language proficiency test and a placement test for students at the university level.

This study will use a cloze test with Thai students at the university level. The main objective is to investigate the possibility of using cloze tests as a measure of English language proficiency with Thai university graduates and to determine the degree to which performance on a cloze test will distinguish the student English proficiency levels.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Subjects

The subjects consisted of 59 Thai university graduates who were enrolled in the Intensive English Training Course of the English language program at the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) in February 1984. These subjects graduated from various universities in Thailand and majored in different fields of study. The subjects were grouped into three levels according to their English Proficiency Test (EPT) scores : Level 1, having EPT scores ranging from 61–79, Level 2, having EPT scores ranging from 52–60, and Level 3, having EPT scores ranging from 40–51.

### 2.2 Instruments

The English Language Cloze Test. The cloze passage used was taken from *English for Academic Uses : A Writing Workbook* by Judith-Anne Adams and Margaret A. Dwyer (1982). This passage, totaling 474 words, is entitled, "The World's Food Crisis" (see Appendix A). According to the Dale–Chall readability formula (Dale & Chall, 1948), this passage was at the grade XIII through college level. As is customary, the first and the last two sentences of the cloze passage were left intact to provide a frame. Every seventh word was deleted for a total of 60 blanks. This cloze test was scored by both exact-word scoring and the acceptable-word scoring.

The English Proficiency Test. The English Proficiency Test (EPT) was also used as a placement test for the Intensive English Training Course of the

English language program at NIDA. This English Proficiency Test was developed and standardized by the English language program staff. It consists of five parts : 1) Listening Comprehension 2) Vocabulary 3) Structure Comprehension 4) Reading Comprehension, and 5) Writing. The first four parts consist of multiple-choice items and the last part involves sentence combination. The EPT scores ranged from 40 to 79 out of 100 points.

A short questionnaire on the students' familiarity with a cloze test and on the difficulty of the cloze passage itself was also given (see Appendix B). This questionnaire was used to determine whether familiarity with this type of test (cloze test) and the difficulty of the cloze passage were factors influencing the students' understanding of the cloze passage.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Guttman split-half reliability was estimated for the cloze test. The reliability of the cloze-exact word scoring is .79 and the reliability of the cloze-acceptable word scoring is .88. These two reliabilities are considered quite high. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the cloze test and the English Proficiency Test.

**Table 1**

Descriptive Statistics of the Cloze Test and The English Proficiency Test

Variable	N of cases	$\bar{X}$	SD
Cloze Test	59	19.96	6.11
1. Exact-word Scoring	59	24.57	7.58
2. Acceptable-word Scoring			
English Proficiency Test			
1. Listening Comprehension (25 points)	59	14.22	3.36
2. Vocabulary (20 points)	59	13.83	2.73
3. Structure Comprehension (10 points)	59	6.11	1.83
4. Reading (20 points)	59	10.47	2.67
5. Writing (25 points)	59	12.77	3.92

The intercorrelations among the cloze-exact, cloze acceptable and the English Proficiency Test are presented in Table 2

Table 2

Intercorrelations among Cloze-Exact, Cloze-Acceptable, Total Scores of Proficiency Test and its Parts.

	Proficiency Test	Cloze-Exact	Cloze-Acceptable	Listening	Vocabulary	Structure Comprehension	Reading	Writing
Proficiency Test	1.0	.723	.741	.719	.756	.583	.681	.761
Cloze-Exact		1.0	.950	.682	.444	.511	.328	.457
Cloze-Acceptable			1.0	.725	.482	.537	.398	.475

Note : All correlations were significant ( $p < .01$ ).

Table 2 shows a significant, positive correlation ( $r = .723$ ) between the close-exact scores and the total scores of the English Proficiency Test, between the close-acceptable scores and the total scores of the English Proficiency Test ( $r = .741$ ), and between the close-exact and close-acceptable scores ( $r = .950$ ). Furthermore, we find that when we examine the correlations among the separate parts of the English Proficiency Test, close-exact scores, and close-acceptable scores, the close-exact scores correlated best with Listening Comprehension ( $r = .682$ ). So did the close-acceptable scores ( $r = .725$ ). However, the reading subtest of the English Proficiency Test is least well correlated with both the close-exact ( $r = .328$ ) and the close-acceptable ( $r = .398$ ) scores. According to the questionnaires of 48 students who took the cloze test, most of them found the cloze passage rather difficult and most of them only somewhat understood the cloze passage. Therefore, when the context of the cloze passage was not clear to them, they probably could not fill in the blanks as well as they should. That might cause the low correlation between the cloze test and the Reading subtest.

A one-way analysis of variance was also computed to find out if the differences between the means of the three levels of students were significant. An F-value of 18.385 was found, significant at less than .001. This indicates that all three levels of students differ significantly from one another.

**Table 3**

A One-Way Analysis of Variance of Cloze Test Scores by Group Level

Source	df	MS	F	F-prob.
Between groups	2	661.986	18.385	.001
Within groups	56	36.008		
Total	58			

#### 4. Conclusion

It is interesting to note that both the cloze-exact and cloze acceptable scores correlated more highly with the listening comprehension subtest than with any other subtest. Several other correlational studies (Darnell, 1968 ; Oller, 1973 ; Hinofotis 1976, Shohamy, 1978) also found that cloze tests correlated highly with tests of listening comprehension. It may be assumed that when taking cloze tests and listening comprehension tests, the full message is partially seen and heard in cloze tests and listening comprehension tests. Therefore, the reader or listener has to use contextual clues to help him understand the mutilated message. The same type of skill seems to be used in both cloze tests and listening comprehension tests.

In conclusion, the statistical results of the study seem to support the use of the cloze procedure as a measure of English language proficiency. Therefore, further experimentation with and refinement of the cloze procedure should play a useful role in further use of the cloze procedure in Thailand.

## Appendix A

### Cloze Test

**Instructions :**

In the following passage every seventh word has been taken out and blank put in its place. Your job will be to guess which word has been left out of each space and write that word in the answer sheet provided. You will be given forty-five minutes to finish this test.

People all over the world are concerned about the problem of hunger, Many individuals and religious, national, and \_\_\_\_\_ organizations have worked to eliminate this \_\_\_\_\_ problem. However, their efforts have met \_\_\_\_\_ only limited success. In Asia and \_\_\_\_\_, for example, millions of people still \_\_\_\_\_ a constant battle against starvation. All \_\_\_\_\_ us agree that the crisis must \_\_\_\_\_ handled quickly and effectively. However, the \_\_\_\_\_ and solutions of the hunger problem \_\_\_\_\_ varied and complicated, Agricultural production has \_\_\_\_\_ on weather conditions. Even in today's \_\_\_\_\_ world, where great scientific advances are \_\_\_\_\_ all over, humanity has not yet \_\_\_\_\_ how to control or even influence \_\_\_\_\_ weather. The amount of rainfall is \_\_\_\_\_ very important factor that can cause \_\_\_\_\_ to succeed or fail. Some countries \_\_\_\_\_ problems with floods; other suffer from \_\_\_\_\_ opposite condition: long periods of drought \_\_\_\_\_ leave the land dry, hard, and \_\_\_\_\_.

To increase food production, technology is \_\_\_\_\_, and the high cost of this \_\_\_\_\_ is another problem for agriculture. Farm \_\_\_\_\_ is not cheap. Some machines cost \_\_\_\_\_ of dollars. The high price of \_\_\_\_\_ also makes increasing agricultural production more \_\_\_\_\_ because oil is needed to operate \_\_\_\_\_ to produce and transport food and \_\_\_\_\_ produce most of the

fertilizers that \_\_\_\_\_ be used to improve the quality \_\_\_\_\_ the soil.  
 29 30

A third factor that \_\_\_\_\_ the worldwide food crisis is the \_\_\_\_\_  
 31 32  
 rate of population increase. World population \_\_\_\_\_ to increase at a rate of  
 33  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 100 million people a year; as a \_\_\_\_\_, it is impossible for agricultural  
 34 35  
 production \_\_\_\_\_ keep up with population growth. It \_\_\_\_\_ been predicted  
 36 37  
 that if agricultural output \_\_\_\_\_ not greatly increased and the birth \_\_\_\_\_  
 38 39  
 is not dramatically decreased, the situation \_\_\_\_\_ be even more disastrous in the  
 40  
 \_\_\_\_\_.  
 41

In addition to, and perhaps more \_\_\_\_\_ than, the problem, of pro-  
 42  
 ducing enough \_\_\_\_\_ to feed the world population is \_\_\_\_\_ problem of  
 43 44  
 distributing the food which \_\_\_\_\_ grown. Hunger would not necessarily exist,  
 45  
 \_\_\_\_\_ not everyone has the money to \_\_\_\_\_ the food required for an  
 46 47  
 adequate \_\_\_\_\_. In some places, crops are permitted \_\_\_\_\_ rot in the fields  
 48 49  
 because they \_\_\_\_\_ be sold at a profitable price, \_\_\_\_\_ other places, babies  
 50 51  
 starve to death \_\_\_\_\_ their first birthday.

52  
 Many solutions have \_\_\_\_\_ suggested for the food problem. The  
 53  
 \_\_\_\_\_ most important suggestions, distributing food more \_\_\_\_\_, developing  
 54 55  
 new farmland, and limiting population, \_\_\_\_\_ all very expensive and difficult.  
 56  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_ include convincing rich nations to consume \_\_\_\_\_ food,  
 57 58  
 distributing land more efficiently and \_\_\_\_\_, and developing new types of food  
 59  
 \_\_\_\_\_ can be produced cheaply. All of these solutions would require more  
 60  
 money, effort, and international cooperation than we have ever seen used for any  
 project in the history of the world. We must hope that some of these solutions can  
 be implemented anyway.

## Answers Key

Items	Original Words	Alternative Words
1.	international	local, regional, social, world, governmental
2.	terrible	serious, worldwide, severe, important difficult
3.	with	
4.	Africa	
5.	fight	
6.	of	
7.	be	
8.	causes	
9.	are	were
10.	depended	
11.	modern	industrialized, scientific
12.	seen	made, achieved, occurring, spreaded
13.	learned	
14.	the	
15.	a	
16.	agriculture	crops, planting, agricultural production
17.	have	confront, face
18.	the	other
19.	that	which
20.	unproductive	infertile, unplatable, uncultivated useless
21.	needed	necessary, used, utilized, required
22.	technology	machinery, equipment, method, procedure
23.	machinery	equipment, mechanization
24.	thousands	millions, a lot
25.	oil	fuels
26.	expensive	costly
27.	machines	them, engines
28.	to	
29.	can	will, must
30.	of	
31.	causes	underlies, affects, influences, effects
32.	rapid	high, alarming
33.	continues	seems, tends
34.	nearly	about, approximately
35.	result	rule, norm
36.	to	
37.	has	
38.	is	was
39.	rate	



**Answer Key (Continued)**

Items	Original Words	Alternative words
40.	will	may, should, would, must
41.	future	
42.	important	serious, crucial
43.	food	
44.	the	
45.	is	
46.	but	since
47.	buy	purchase
48.	diet	consumption
49.	to	
50.	cannot	couldn't, might not
51.	in	
52.	before	on, during
53.	been	
54.	three	
55.	equitably	equally, efficiently
56.	are	
57.	suggestions	measures, steps, solution, ways
58.	less	
59.	fairly	equitably, thoroughly, cheaply
60.	that	which

**Appendix B**

## Questionnaire

1. Have you ever taken any cloze test before?  
Regularly : -  
Occasionally : 13 students  
Never : 35 students
2. Do you understand the cloze passage?  
Yes : 14 students  
Somewhat : 32 students  
No : 2 students
3. Is the cloze passage difficult?  
Very difficult : 7 students  
Somewhat : 31 students  
Not difficult : 10 students
4. Is the cloze passage too long?  
Very long : 13 students  
Somewhat : 30 students  
Not long : 5 students
5. Do you think a cloze test is a good English Proficiency Test for Thai students?  
Yes : 33 students  
No : 13 students