

The Correlation between Students' Performance in Cloze Test and Writing Test: An Applied Study on University Students in UAE

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Abstract :

This paper aims at investigating the correlation between students' performance in cloze test and other English tests especially writing test. 60 female university students (level two) from two universities in United Arab Emirates (UAE) participated in the study. Their age ranged between 18 and 25. Data was collected from students' answers to questions in paper-based tests such as final exams which tested students in reading comprehension, grammar, vocabulary and writing. Students also took cloze tests. The results of these tests were tabulated and analysed and the correlations of the cloze test performance with the performance of the other skills were calculated. Special relation with the productive skill of writing was noted and discussed. Discussion about language testing is included along with the education background in UAE. The Gestalt theory was discussed as the cloze procedure is based on it. The advantages of the cloze were also mentioned.

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There were three working hypotheses:

1. There is a high correlation between the cloze test and the reading comprehension tests and grammar tests.
2. Cloze tests have a low correlation with vocabulary tests.
3. Cloze tests have a low a correlation with writing tests.

It is found that reading comprehension has a high correlation with Cloze. Grammar also has a reasonable correlation with Cloze. In the case of vocabulary, the second hypotheses also proved to be right. However, on the basis of our study, it is not possible to substitute the vocabulary test for the Cloze. Writing which is the mainstay of the **work shows a very low correlation with Cloze.**

keywords: correlation; cloze tests; UAE; discrete point tests; productive skills, writing.

Introduction:

This study was done on a sample of college students in the UAE. They were given question papers of the kind they answer in the class in the final exams at the end of each semester and cloze tests. The results of these tests were then tabulated and analysed and the correlation of the cloze test performance with the performance of other skills was observed. Its special relation or lack of it to the productive skill of writing was noted and discussed. This will be discussed in two perspectives: theoretical and practical.

- 1- The theoretical perspective:

Language Testing:

This paper is about language tests. Language testing has become an area of great interest and a field in its own right. A little history of language testing will be helpful here. The Cloze test always existed in some form or the other in the history of language testing.

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History of language testing is as old as that of language teaching. At every stage, testing has co-existed with teaching. Here, the concern is language testing. The learner is taught and taught how to submit to testing. Linguistics, language teaching and language testing are closely connected since they all derive something from the psychology of language learning. This has been largely responsible for the various paradigms in linguistics. It decided the methods of language teaching and partly language testing. Partly, since language testing is also determined by another very important factor – what is meant by knowing a language, i.e., how do we define language proficiency.

A generally agreed minimal definition of this entity called language proficiency then is the learner’s ability to use language in real-life situations. One could say that the learner should be able to communicate with the native speaker but that brings in other variables. So ‘ability to use real-life language’ is what most people settle for.

According to Brière, identifying what goes into the parameters of language is itself a difficult job. In fact, Briere also states that proficiency, more importantly, is independent of a specific book or pedagogical method.⁽¹⁾ However, Farhady thinks that the definition given by Briere (1972) leaves too much scope for ambiguity and hence results in a vague concept of a proficiency test too.⁽²⁾ The term competence in Briere’s definition might well bring in socio-cultural, or other types of competence and so on. Clark suggests that language proficiency is the person’s ability to use language in real life irrespective of how it was acquired or learnt⁽³⁾. Ibn Jinni⁽⁴⁾ is of the view that language is a collection of sounds with which people express their purposes.

At this point it may be reminded that the theory on which the teaching method is based informs the test; in other words, for example, the structuralist paradigm gave rise to the discrete point tests. These were tests that tested each component of language such as grammar, vocabulary, spellings, and so on since it was believed that language was made up of these components and if one learned the components one would be proficient at the language. So, the discrete point tests. Before the structuralist paradigm we had the Grammar Translation method of teaching and testing. After it comes the cognitive paradigm and the integrative tests, and the communicative approach to language teaching which brought in its wake the integrative pragmatic tests. The focus shifted from the classroom to real life situations and language used in such situations.

It is agreed that the integrative / pragmatic tests are the best to indicate the abilities of the learner which make up this proficiency. However, discrete point tests exist side by side to test specific abilities. So there are cloze tests as the integrative tests and also the grammar or vocabulary tests as the discrete point tests.

The present study attempts to find the correlation between some discrete point tests like the grammar test and the vocabulary test and the cloze; it also attempts to find the correlation between reading comprehension tests and cloze and more importantly, writing tests and the cloze. The last one is of special interest since writing is a productive skill.

This test is especially significant since it is carried out in the UAE, which in itself, is very unique in terms of language, culture and hence the general attitude of its people.

A short background of the place for this study is in order here. The UAE has experienced a phenomenal development in public national educational system in a thirty-year period that is similar to what Western countries established in over a hundred-year period. (United Arab Emirates - History Background).

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It has continued on the journey to emerge in global affairs as one of the wealthiest and most dynamic of the smaller countries of the world. The rapid infrastructure development in virtually every corner of the country provides visual evidence of immense change. Public and private enterprise is more evidence of the tremendous development.

The UAE is a conglomeration of 7 emirates. Abu Dhabi is the largest city and is the national capital. It is the financial, transportation, and communications center of a major petroleum-producing area. Abu Dhabi is also home to federal government ministries and embassies. Dubai is the main trading center of the entire Gulf, has the principal port facilities of the UAE as well as its busiest airport, and has several large commercial enterprises.

The native population of the UAE is Arab. About two-thirds of the UAE's non-native population is Asians (largely Indians, Pakistanis, Sri Lankans, Bangladeshis, and Filipinos), and the other third are Iranians or Arabs (primarily Jordanians, Palestinians, and Egyptians).

Arabic is the official language of the UAE. English is also widely spoken, as are Hindi, Urdu, and Persian. Islam is the official religion of the country. Given these facts it follows that the culture of the UAE is a blend of traditional and modern elements, which is open to many types of influences and change. The religion of Islam and the heritage of a traditional, tribal Arab society form the basis of a stable and conservative social structure.

Coming to education, education in the United Arab Emirates began shortly after the establishment of the federation with the inception of the first university in Al Ain, Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates University. Since then, the country has progressed with efforts to ensure high literacy rates, modern programs and women's share in education. The UAE currently devotes approximately 25 percent of total federal government spending to education. The overall literacy rate is 90% (United Arab Emirates - History Background).

This short background and the multicultural set up of the UAE have a very special place and space for English and so for English language teaching.

In language teaching, the cloze exercise has been around since a long time as mentioned above, in the form of fill-in-the-blanks. It was given special significance and meaning when it was seen as a closure exercise. The word *cloze* is derived from *closure* in Gestalt theory. The exercise was first described by Taylor in 1953.⁽⁵⁾

Before talking about the cloze, a moment with the **Gestalt theory**.

First of all, a cloze test is a fill-in-the-blanks test. While the fill-in-the-blanks typically has one sentence with one or two or sometimes three blanks, a cloze test is a passage with many numbered blanks to be filled in with the words of choices. Now, in the fill-in-the-blanks test understanding is limited of the sentence where as in the case of cloze, the understanding needed is of the whole context of the passage. It tests the person's ability to understand the context and to choose the correct and appropriate words to fit the context. The word 'cloze' is derived from the 'closure' in gestalt psychology and this test is also called cloze deletion test.

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Gestalt psychology or **gestaltism**⁽⁶⁾ is a philosophy of mind of the Berlin School of Experimental Psychology. "Gestalt psychology is an attempt to understand the laws behind the ability to acquire and maintain meaningful perceptions in an apparently chaotic world." The central principle of gestalt psychology is that the mind forms a global whole with self-organizing tendencies.

The Gestalt theory of perception has been criticized and there is little that holds the classic phenomena of Gestalt psychology together. But the cloze stayed on and created a life of its own.

This principle maintains that when the human mind⁽⁷⁾ forms a percept or "gestalt", the whole has a reality of its own, independent of the parts. In the words of the Gestalt psychologist Kurt Koffka, "The whole is *other* than the sum of the parts".

In 1953, Taylor introduced the "**cloze procedure**". It was as a method of measuring the "readability," or difficulty, of a text, and later (1956) as a measure of reading comprehension for native speakers. The method involved systematically or randomly deleting words from a particular passage and asking the student to restore the missing words. This gained popularity immediately and stayed as such. Its popularity is evident in the literature even today.

It is interesting that since a long time the Cloze procedure was used in language teaching. It was Brown (2002) who noted that for the first time Cloze procedure has been used for measuring reliability of written materials of the students in United States, and later on for different purpose in language teaching.

Moreover, the cloze is such a versatile procedure that it is used as a method of testing, a method of second language teaching and so on.

The Method of cloze: The method is about the same as the one for the fill-in-the-blanks question, viz. to identify the clue for the blank and proceed to answer. However, there is a small difference – the fill-in-the-blanks sentence clue lies within the sentence but in the case of cloze, it may not necessarily be in the sentence but in the whole paragraph.

The best way to go about it is to read the entire passage, understand the context, the logical sense, the words already used, positivity / negativity, tone and if possible the intent of the paragraph. Then go about it the same way as the fill-in-the-blanks.

It is interesting that despite the wide-spread debate over the use of **the cloze, its popularity** does not wane especially in second language testing and teaching. Researchers, language teachers and testers have different opinions of what skills are used to fill in the blanks in a cloze test and, consequently exactly what constructs can be measured by cloze. Some scholars⁽⁸⁾ believe that traditional cloze tests in which every nth word is deleted cannot measure “macro-level” or “higher-order” reading skills, but measure mostly only sentence level knowledge.⁽⁹⁾ Others maintain that traditional cloze tests are sensitive to both sentence level knowledge and inter-sentential knowledge.⁽¹⁰⁾ In addition, there is another group⁽¹¹⁾ who use the cloze to construct general language proficiency rather than reading proficiency alone⁽¹²⁾, which further confuses its use. In fact, Brown points out that each cloze test, in fact, each cloze item, may function very differently for different language groups, requiring different skills for individual test-takers, depending on their proficiency level and other individual differences⁽¹³⁾. It must be mentioned that looking at the gestalt beginnings of the cloze, at least one of the skills required to fill in or “cloze” the gaps created by deletion of words is not a language skill at all, but rather a kind of non-verbal reasoning skill, known in Gestalt psychology as “closure”. It is also claimed that cloze tests measure abilities that are language independent, even if partially so.

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Irrespective of the academic debate between the proponents of lexical knowledge and discourse competence, both of them are critical abilities in a language learner’s skills. Cloze tests are often included as components of many standardized proficiency tests or language program placement tests. McCray and Brunfaut(2017) used an eye-tracking study of 28 participants to test the hypothesis. They found that the number of times a participant glanced to the word bank was a significant predictor of accuracy; lower-scoring test-takers made more visits to the word bank than did higher-scoring test-takers⁽¹⁴⁾. High performers were able to retain, recall, or naturally supply the correct words quicker than the low performers. On the basis of these results it can be said that both lexical knowledge *and* discourse competence are two of the cognitive processes governing performance of the cloze exercises.

As for the deletion, Alderson and Bachman, have discussed the arbitrary selection of words for deletion as in every n^{th} word (where $n = 7$) deletion method. This leads to the deletion of a large quantity of function words because they are the most frequent type in the English language. These function words can normally be restored using sentence-level (syntactic) knowledge alone and understanding of the broader text is not required for successful completion of the clozed items.⁽¹⁵⁾ Levenston, Nir, and Blum-Kulka(1984) argued that “semotactic”⁽¹⁶⁾ cloze gaps can also be filled by lexical knowledge alone without reference to the wider text.⁽¹⁷⁾ These results suggest that the deleted words can be chosen by the examiner / teacher depending on what is to be taught or tested. For example, cohesive devices and content words that depend on meanings and relationships across sentences can be targeted for deletion in order to tap into a reader’s ability to make associations across sentences and between paragraphs. Alderson and Bachman have both suggested a rational deletion method.

Alderson first suggested that the missing words be possible to regain by understanding at the clause-level, sentence-level, intersentential, text level, and beyond the text.

The advantages of the cloze are so many that teachers and language professionals do not want to abandon it. The cloze test is easy to construct, easy to administer, to score and calculate.⁽¹⁸⁾ Research has also pointed out that the results of the cloze tests correlate well with almost every kind of language test.⁽¹⁹⁾ Cloze tests, it was found in two criterion-related validity studies, to correlate not only with reading comprehension tests (.80 in Oller& Conrad and in Hinofotis) but also with dictation (.82, Oller& Conrad), listening comprehension (.71, Hinofotis), structure/grammar (.63, Hinofotis; .58, Oller& Conrad), and vocabulary tests (.59 in both Hinofotis and Oller& Conrad).⁽²⁰⁾ This led Oller and Conrad (1971) and others to mark cloze procedures as integrative tests and as good measures of general language proficiency rather than only specific reading comprehension.⁽²¹⁾

Another benefit of the cloze deletion exercise method is the fact that it can be changed considering the needs of the learner. Even if one sees language learning as a series of elaborate cognitive behaviors working together, rather than a uniform process, the age of the learner, language exposure, language-learning experience, personal attitude, etc. are all important variables for each individual.

The compensatory behaviour operates here too. Shortcomings in one variable may be compensated for by another variable. For example, older learners who have a high amount of motivation may perform similarly to younger learners with low motivation (Masgoret and Gardner). Ajideh, et al. (2017) found that individual learning strategies had an effect on cloze test performance for a group of 158 language learners in Iran.⁽²²⁾ Students who learned better through indirect mental processing techniques such as planning, evaluating, seeking opportunities, controlling anxiety, increasing cooperation and

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empathy, and focusing performed better on the cloze tests than students who relied on the direct mental processing techniques of memorizing, analysis, compensation, and transformation or synthesis of learning materials. Because cloze tests contain a large cognitive and reasoning component, learners who use indirect learning methods may perform better on these tasks.

The main advantage of the Cloze test as a reading comprehension test is that it does not require the reader to read the questions about the text before answering, and thus eliminates problems that the reader might get into the trap of misinterpretation the test questions; when undertaking a Cloze test, the test-taker responds directly to the reading passage itself.

Cloze tests can be applied to a variety of grammatical or thematic environments. Grammatical elements such as adjectives, nouns, verbs, or function words like articles and prepositions can be targeted as focus areas. It is interesting that cloze tests can also be specially created for day-to-day situations like expression of different emotions, situation in a doctor’s office, shopping and buying, or other subject areas. Besides vocabulary, cloze exercises can also be exclusively created for higher-level language abilities such as subject-verb agreement, gender/number agreement, case, or tenses.

Gaillard and Tremblay (2016) compared an Elicited Imitation Task to the cloze test scores of French learners (including at least 6 self-identified native or heritage speakers of French). Elicited Imitation Task consisted of imitating sentences spoken by a person. They found that learners who were good at this, i.e., who had oral proficiency also performed well on cloze tests; their understanding of the language as a whole.⁽²³⁾

A very strong point of the cloze is that it is a valid and reliable test of language proficiency is proved by the correlations of the students' scores on the Cloze tests and their scores on other tests that measure language skills. These skills are reading comprehension, listening comprehension, writing, speaking and overall language proficiency.

A study by Darnell (1968) showed that the correlation of a Cloze test with the parts

and total scores of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) was .73 correlations with the Listening Comprehension section. These very results were replicated time and again in many research studies with the UCLA English as a Second Language Placement Exam (ESLPE) (Shohamy19). In the studies of Oller and Conrad (1971) the correlations between the Cloze scores and dictation were found to be as high as .82.⁽²⁴⁾ Bormouth (1962) found correlations ranging from .73 to .93 between Cloze and several reading tests.

Not only in English but in other languages too the Cloze procedure seems to have a high correlation with other tests. For instance, Klare, Sinaikio, and Stolorow (1971) worked with equal success with the Cloze procedure in Vietnamese. The results for French (Kerr 1972) and Chinese (Leong 1972) are the same.

Mason (1971) investigated the Cloze procedure as a measure of language competence for Thai students as well as native English-speaking students while Toiemah (1978) obtained correlations ranging from .65 to .79 between two Cloze tests in Arabic and the Arab Proficiency Test which tests listening, vocabulary, grammar, reading, and writing. Hebrew shows the same results as in other languages.

All these results are reason enough for the advocates of the Cloze to prescribe it as a test in place of all the other tests which are more complicated to design, administer and score.

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To summarize this part of the paper, language learning is mostly difficult work for many learners and there are many factors that may inhibit or enhance the learner’s success. There are many techniques which are used to assist language learning, one of them is the close deletion exercise. Cloze deletion exercises have been around for decades by language learners of all levels, and have been shown to benefit learning in a number of ways. They focus on usage-based learning, can be created as per the individual needs, and are flexible in their application. Computer-assisted language learning has increased the possibility of application of the cloze test.

2- The practical perspective:

The present study:

The present study consisted of students from two universities – 30 from each. As said above, the study aims to find out if there is a correlation in the results of the cloze test and other discrete point tests in the question paper, such as reading comprehension, grammar, vocabulary and writing in the context of Dubai.

Hypotheses:

There were three working hypotheses:

1. There is a high correlation between the cloze test and reading comprehension tests and grammar tests.
2. Cloze tests have a low correlation with vocabulary tests.
3. Cloze tests have a low a correlation with writing tests.

To explain why these hypotheses were posited, the first hypothesis – that there is a high correlation between the cloze test and reading comprehension tests and grammar tests - is the result of a number of studies which find that Cloze has a high correlation with reading comprehension and grammar tests. So this hypothesis is an attempt at testing out these findings in the case of the UAE (Dubai) students who learners of English as a second language.

About the second hypothesis – that Cloze tests have a low correlation with vocabulary tests - it has been observed in the course of teaching that vocabulary is not a strong point of the students. In informal observations it was noted that students did reasonably well on the cloze but not necessarily the vocabulary tests. This called for a formal investigation.

The third hypothesis is about writing – that Cloze tests have a low a correlation with writing tests. Writing tasks of the students during teaching showed that Cloze and writing did not relate as highly as has been claimed in studies. So this was a case for investigation. The relation of the cloze to the productive skill of writing is the central point of this study.

The key words are **correlation, cloze tests, discrete point tests, productive skills** and **writing**. Let's take them one by one.

Correlation is a mutual relationship or connection between two or more things.

Correlation is a statistical measure that indicates the extent to which two or more variables fluctuate together. A positive correlation indicates the extent to which those variables increase or decrease in parallel; a negative correlation indicates the extent to which one variable increases as the other decreases. However, correlation does not imply causation – means it does not indicate that one is the cause of the other. Correlation is measured between $\{-1\}$ and $\{+1\}$. We also talk of a high correlation, moderate correlation and low correlation and of significant correlation and non-significant correlation.

Cloze tests and discrete point tests have been discussed above.

The productive skills are speaking and writing. When learners speak and writethey produce language. These skills are also known as active skills. They can be compared with the receptive skills of listening and reading. Our focus here, in this study is writing.

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As for writing, it is a skill that needs special attention. It is one of the most complex skills for the learners. Writing is an activity involving a complex combination of skills and it is creative. Producing language in the form of writing involves a number of abilities - it involves a reasonable control of language. That means the student must know how to write the words on paper or any other medium, or type the letters. She or he must be able to construct a grammatical sentence, must know the vocabulary that goes into it; must be able to arrange ideas about the topic logically – cohesion and coherence. In addition, she or he should have an idea of the pragmatics of the language, the socio-culture aspect of the language and so on.

Writing skills are an important part of communication. Correct grammar, punctuation and spelling are key elements in writing.

The Sample: The sample consisted of 30 students from each of the two universities. These were girls randomly selected from the second year who were still beginners though they had some exposure to college education. These were girls within the age group of 18 to 25 coming from the local areas. Out of the total number of tests produced, 52 items were taken since the other ten were not completed or had some other problem. They were invalid.

Material: There were **two tasks** to be done by the selected students.

The first task consisted of the question paper which hence forth we will call the **exam paper**. This paper had four sections - just like the ones the students do at the end of the semester – the final exams. This question paper consisted of four sections -a reading comprehension section, i.e. a passage with questions based on it; a grammar section which consisted of grammar sentences, a vocabulary section with words and finally a writing section which had a paragraph writing task. Each section was marked out of 10 marks. A

pilot question paper was made and tested. It was found to be reliable, fit to be used for the purpose of this study.

The second task was a question paper consisting of the cloze passage. Three cloze passages were chosen and put through the routine of a pilot and tested for reliability. Two of them were found to be reliable and used as the task. This too was marked out of 10. The words for the cloze blanks were given in the paper and the students had to use them like fill-in-the-blanks.

Methodology:

First of all, the **exam papers** were corrected just as the end-of-semester papers are corrected. That is to say, the comprehension section was corrected on the basis of the correct answer and marked out of 10. The grammar section had sentences which were corrected as either right or wrong. Vocabulary section was also developed discretely so that it could be corrected in terms of correct or incorrect answers.

Then came the writing section. Now, given that these were beginners, correction of written tasks was clearly defined. First of all, the sentences had to be grammatical, spelling mistakes were not considered, ideas had to be arranged logically, i.e., the cohesion and coherence in writing was a point to note. This was a 10 marks task.

Then the cloze passage. Since the words for the cloze blanks were given in the paper and the students had to choose the right ones from among them, the marking was again right or not.

Data analysis:

The aim of this study was to find out if there is a correlation between the cloze test and the discrete point tests of grammar and vocabulary, and reading comprehension test and writing test in the **exam paper**.

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The first thing a table was made in the excel sheet in which the marks in all the tasks were tabulated. After that was done, the Mean, Variance, and Standard Deviation were worked out. And finally, of course the correlation of the various tests and the cloze were calculated and tabulated.

All these were put into diagrams and graphs.

First of all, the marks of the 52 students were put in a table in the following order -first the reading comprehension test marks, then the grammar test marks, followed by the vocabulary marks and the writing task marks – in that order. Finally, were the marks of the cloze test. Table 1 consists of an example of this.

In Table 2, the mean of each test, in fact, each column is given. This was followed by finding out the correlations between the cloze and each of the other tests individually, one by one, and so on.

Table 1 : distance or closeness of the scores of each individual:

S.N	COMPREHENION	GRAMMAR	VOCAB	WRTING	CLOZ
1	8	7	9	6	8
2	8	8	9	7	9
3	10	8	9	8	9
4	10	8	10	8	8
5	8	7	8	8	7
6	6	6	7	4	5
7	10	7	9	2	7
8	6	7	5	4	6
9	6	6	9	6	7
10	5	5	5	6	5
11	8	8	9	8	7
12	8	8	8	6	8
13	10	9	8	8	7
14	10	8	9	8	8
15	6	5	7	5	7
16	10	9	10	4	9
17	10	9	6	4	10
18	6	5	8	5	7
19	10	8	9	8	9

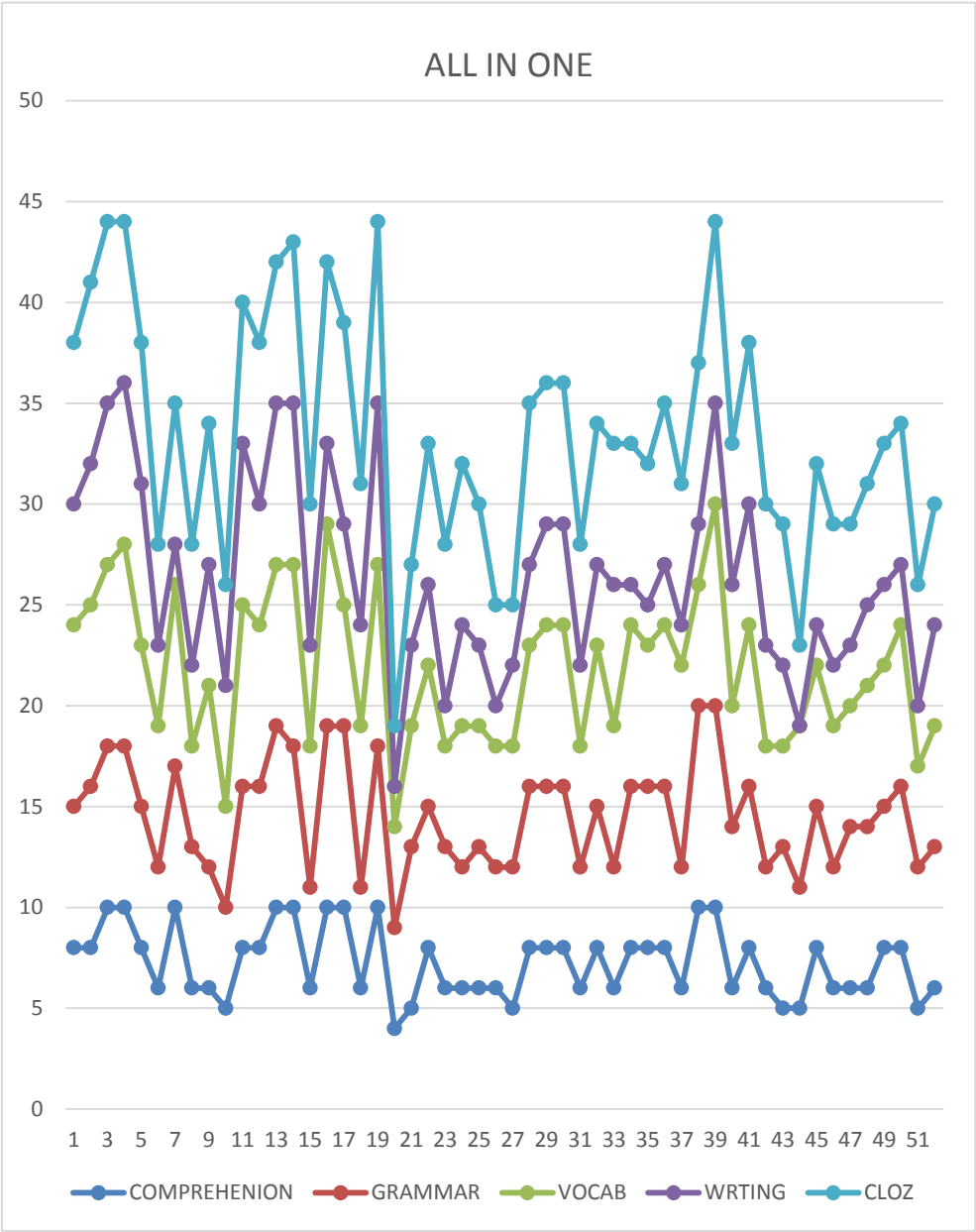
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In Table 1 we can see the distance or closeness of the scores of each individual. Upon doing some descriptive statistical procedures the following data

Table 2: correlations of the various items, viz., the correlations of the cloze with each of the other tests.

in table2 below were obtained for the correlations of the various items, viz., the correlations of the cloze with each of the other tests.

44	5	6	8	0	4
45	8	7	7	2	8
46	6	6	7	3	7
47	6	8	6	3	6
48	6	8	7	4	6
49	8	7	7	4	7
50	8	8	8	3	7
51	5	7	5	3	6
52	6	7	6	5	6
Mean	7.269230769	7.269230769	7.326923077	4.538461538	6.961538462
Correl	0.740517919	0.515774747	0.493686304	0.37402239	



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In the following we will investigate the research hypotheses we posited above and the correlation between cloze test and the other tests in the exam paper which include the reading comprehension, grammar, vocabulary and writing tests scores. After examining the full data and observing the calculations, we can make informed comments about the full picture and the hypotheses.

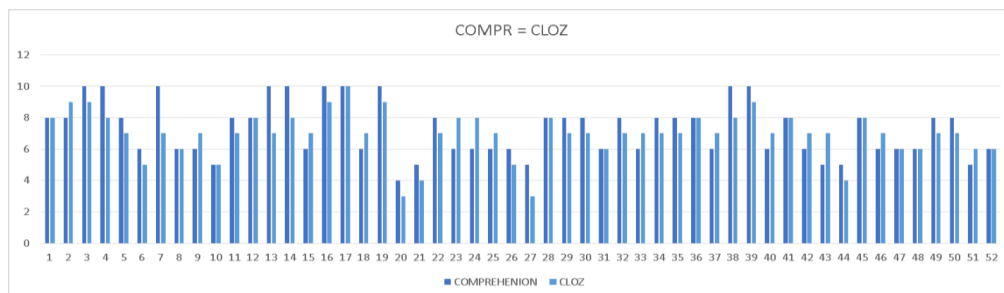
Discussion:

A point needs to be made here. The studies on the correlation of the cloze with the different skills, tests, proficiency are included respectively under the discussion of the various correlations in the following rather than in the beginning of the paper in the background section. The purpose of this is so that they can be seen with the results of our study. So under the discussion of Cloze and Reading comprehension results of this study, i.e. section A, other studies dealing with this topic will be found. Studies dealing with the correlation of the Cloze with Grammar will be found under section B which deals with the results of this in our study and so on.

A. In table 2, we can see the correlation between the **Cloze and the Reading** comprehension tests. The correlation is .74 which is reasonably high. When we take a closer look, it is obvious that both the tests involve reading, understanding the text, at least for the purpose of answering the given questions – as questions or as filling in the blanks. So this is not a surprise. Moreover, this has been recorded and observed earlier. In addition, in both the tests, the answers are present in the passages in front of the student. Both the passages have to be read and understood.

The following table is a representation of the same.

Table 3.



Similar Studies:

Some of the studies done with this aim have interesting results. A study is done on Cloze tests and performance on traditional Reading Comprehension tests among EFL learners including both males and females by Mariam Habibian (2012). The analysis of her data indicated that there is a vital relationship between EFL learners' performance on Reading Comprehension and Cloze tests. It was also found that the gender of the subjects had significant effect on the overall performance of the subjects on the Reading Comprehension and Cloze test and that the female students outperformed the males. Another observation was that she had a better performance on Cloze tests than reading Comprehension tests.⁽²⁵⁾

Cloze tests are associated with the Reading Comprehension testina number of different abilities which include strategic competence in this area. It is well known that the process of reading is considered an important skill. This idea agrees with Dreyer (1998) according to whom one of the vital skills for individuals who learn a second language is reading.⁽²⁶⁾ In addition, Auerbach and Paxton stress the importance of the process of Reading comprehension. In their words: "Reading research suggests those learners' conceptions of reading correlate with their strategies and that when they view reading as a sound-or word-centered process, they often rely on processing strategies that impede Comprehension"⁽²⁷⁾.

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Many studies find that there is a close relation between student's performance on Cloze test and Reading Comprehension test. Furthermore, McKenna and Layton (1990) reported that using Cloze test can measure inter-sentential Comprehension. In fact, Hicks (1979) found that among sixth grades there is no differences in mean scores of Cloze tests and informal reading inventory.⁽²⁸⁾

On the other hand, Davidson (1980) found that there is no strong relationship between Cloze test and informal reading inventory during studies of science and social passages.⁽²⁹⁾ Shanahan et al (1982) study compared 'natural', 'scramble', and 'intruded' Cloze tests and come up with the conclusion that, it is unreasonable to use Cloze tests for global comprehension.⁽³⁰⁾ It appears that many scholars have tried to examine the relationship between Reading Comprehension and Cloze tests, but the results are conflicting. The interest of this study is to find out the relation ship between Reading Comprehension and Cloze test among the college students in Dubai.

Besides the concepts of relation and correlation in reading comprehension test scores and cloze scores, Alderson (1986), Vollmer and Sang (1983), add that the degree of Integration or discreteness is related to the level of proficiency, meaning thereby that when learners are more advanced, they are more integrated in their language proficiency and vice-versa.⁽³¹⁾

On the other side researchers suggest that Cloze test scores are an indication of the readers' comprehension ability in general and their language ability in particular.⁽³²⁾

In the present study, as seen from table 2, there is a high correlation between the reading comprehension test scores and the Cloze scores. So the first part of the first hypothesis is confirmed. This can be relevant to language testing and language teaching improvement. Our findings are also supported by Brown's (1994) ideas that one of the ability that influences individual performance on Cloze test is Reading Comprehension skills.⁽³³⁾ Reading therefore, needs to be more emphasized in classrooms for college students. In our study, our students had a better performance on reading comprehension tests compared to the cloze test. This is unlike Habibian (2012) who had a

better performance on Cloze tests than reading Comprehension tests.⁽³⁴⁾

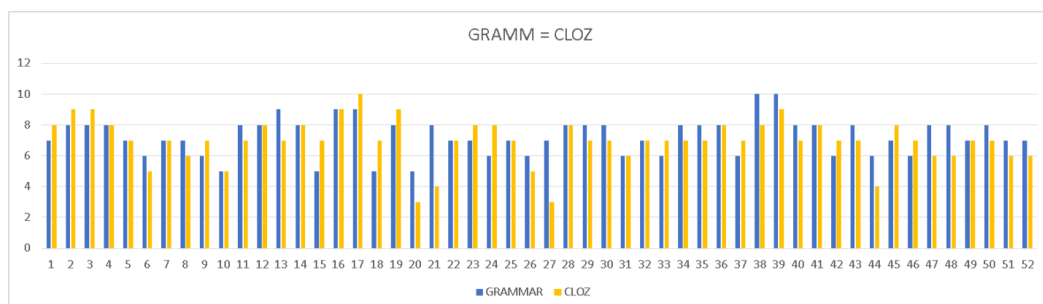
One can agree with Carroll's arguments that, "al though there is a general language ability, at the same time, the language skills have some tendency to be developed and specialized to different degrees or rates, so that different languages kills can be separately recognized and measured "⁽³⁵⁾. In this respect Oller (1979) claimed that "every teacher in every area of the curriculum should be teaching all of the traditionally recognized language skills"⁽³⁶⁾. Alderson's (1991) adds that, the nature of language proficiency and the level of proficiency are interdependence.⁽³⁷⁾

Reading is one of the important skills that English learners cannot ignore. Reading is a skill that can expand learners' knowledge. The importance of reading is comprehending what the text says about a subject. Comprehension is the reason for reading. If readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading. A person's comprehension can be seen from what he understands and what he does not. (Armbruster, 2000).

According to Cunningham in Clarke (1996), reading is related to word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition is the process to know written symbols while comprehension is the process of creating meaning of the words, the sentences in the text that are interconnected.

B. The correlation of Grammartest scores with the cloze tests is .515 as seen from table 2. This is a moderate correlation. It might be said that the second part of our first hypothesis is not proved right.

Table 4.



The Correlation between Students' Performance in Cloze Test and Writing Test

If we look at the studies on correlation of grammar scores and cloze scores we find that there is a very close relation between them.

A grammar test is used to know the students' grammar mastery. A cloze test is meant to find out the students' ability in understanding a text. Tests of grammar with reading comprehension tests have found moderate, positive correlations in the two.⁽³⁸⁾

A study by Ito (1996) used several grammar tests which were found not to be reliable and valid measures of students' proficiency. However, they found one grammar test – test C to have a moderate reliability and correlation with the Cloze Test.⁽³⁹⁾

A number of scholars and researchers (Bachman 1982:61-70) have found that certain types of cloze tests, mainly the selective deletion cloze tests were useful for testing the grammatical knowledge such as cohesion, syntax and strategic textual comprehension.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Closer correlations were also found by Alderson (1979) of the cloze and grammar tests as compared with reading tests.⁽⁴¹⁾ In addition, Bowen et al (1985: 376) claim that selective deletion Cloze is ideal for testing vocabulary and grammar.⁽⁴²⁾ This raises the natural question if students and learners who get higher score on a cloze with selective deletion will also do well on a test designed to measure grammatical competency. Hadley and Naaykens (1999) investigated precisely this – they tested selective deletion Cloze test as a valid measure of grammar-based proficiency in second language learning and found a high correlation in the two tests.⁽⁴³⁾ The cloze test scores correlated with the scores of the grammar-based test resulted in a correlation coefficient of +.72.

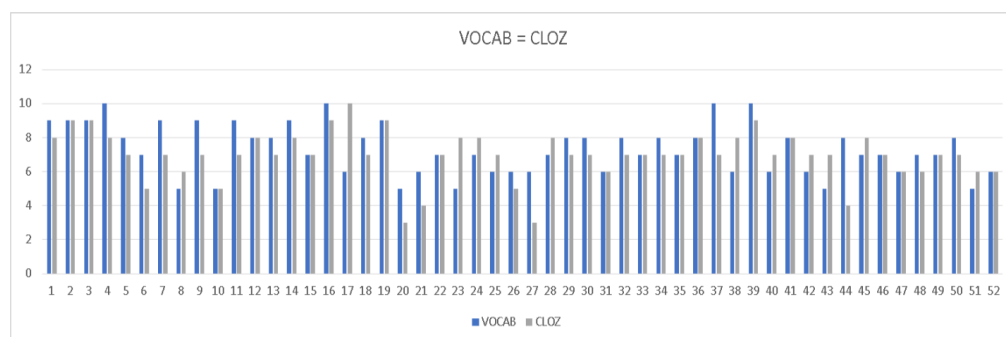
One actually wonders if it is possible to say from our data (+.515 correlation) where the students do perform better on the Cloze than on grammar, that even with a little less grammar it is possible to get by, to understand a cloze passage. It turns out that the context is really important. The language context helps comprehension. It is not

thought that one would venture to say that this will be the case with only a skeletal knowledge of grammar, but with a little less knowledge of grammar as in our study, it may still be possible to follow a Cloze passage.

C. Vocabulary is sometimes a neglected area. Word lists, random words etc. form part of studying vocabulary. In reality, as pointed out in research (K.Nation 2017) children with poor reading comprehension have weaknesses in vocabulary.⁽⁴⁴⁾ It is believed that lack of vocabulary, at least to some extent, may be involved in their reading comprehension deficit. It is also possible that this could be the other way around – that reading comprehension impairments may lead to lack of vocabulary.

The present study shows a correlation of .493 in cloze tests and vocabulary tests. This is what the second hypothesis states.

Table 5.



A 2009 study by Parviz Ajideh is directly about the relationship between multiple choice vocabulary test and integrative cloze test of lexical words in the Iranian context. It aims at finding out if discrete items of vocabulary proficiency show the learners' vocabulary proficiency in the real world of language use. In other words, is there a correlation and how much is the correlation between discrete-point tests and integrative language proficiency tests studying English as a Foreign Language.

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The working hypothesis for Parviz Ajideh's study was: There is a significant correlation between these two kinds of tests. Their results confirm their hypothesis and they also conclude that the two tests are substitutable. It also follows that if a learner does well on one test she or he will do well on the other too. The correlation that was found in the study was: .57.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Now the correlation in our study was less +.49, almost +.5. So, the indication is that there is definitely a link, but it may not be very strong. In fact, how it can be seen is that the context is the key. The work lists or isolated words do not make so much meaning! This means that our 2nd hypothesis is confirmed – as we suspected, there isn't a very high correlation in the vocabulary and Cloze test.

D. WRITING:

To begin with, speaking and writing are both skill specific to the human species. Speech is preprogrammed and intrinsic to the system of man, but writing is a later development and has to be taught and learned. Both are sign systems. However, one is manifested through the phonic medium and the other through a graphic medium, and both are actualizations of man's implicit knowledge of language.

For this paper, writing is focused. Writing is not language but the result of the use of the knowledge of the language manifested through the sign system. That is to say, writing is a channel in which language is the competence and the use of this knowledge is performance. Linguistic competence refers to a person's implicit knowledge of the sign system which he has mastered in order to generate indefinite number of sentences. Contrary to this, performance refers to the dimension of actual verbal behaviour manifested through the graphic medium.

Since written language is concrete it can be assessed any way. It allows time and place to do it. Huges (1989) comments about writing that a writing test is getting people to write and this is followed by correcting it according to a pre-decided scoring way. However, writing tests differ in other aspects.

Writing has been variously classified. According to Brown (2004) there are three classifications of written language: Academic writing consisting of essays, articles, etc. The second classification is of Job-related writing consisting of messages, letters, memos, schedules, reports. The last type of writing is personal writing which includes e-mails, journal entries, fiction, notes, shopping, etc.⁽⁴⁶⁾ Brown further divides writing performance into four areas: imitative, intensive, responsive, and extensive.

Another researcher Weigle (2002) defines performance types as:

1. Reproducing already encoded information
2. Organizing information already known to the writer
3. Inventing / generating new ideas or information

The idea of discussing the types of writing is that it is thought that the right task be chosen for a test. But Hughes (1989) thinks that the reliability of writing tests can be taken care of by giving the student no choice and being made to write in all classifications. He suggested testing the candidates with as many tasks as possible while giving no choice between the different tasks. He also suggested giving candidates a common stimulus for the writing so that the written output is uniform.

As for scoring, different scoring methods are posited: basically holistic scoring, primary trait scoring and analytic scoring though there is a general agreement that the type chosen depends on the purposes of testing and the circumstances of scoring.

The Correlation between Students' Performance in Cloze Test and Writing Test

In a study on the effectiveness of cloze tests in assessing the speaking /writing skills of university EFL learner, Bglkg (2011) found the Cloze tests to be able to measure writing skills to a certain extent.⁽⁴⁷⁾

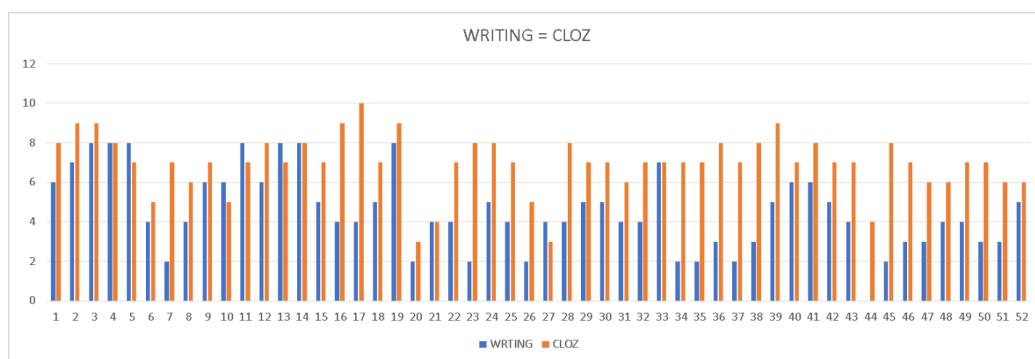
The study of Helmut is an experiment to examine if the cloze test can be an objective measure of a native speaker's writing ability. The sample consisted of 100 freshman English students who were given a modified cloze test. Corrections allowed fine distinctions relating to syntactic fit, semantic fit, and coherence/unity fit, (overall organization). Besides the cloze test, the students had to write an essay on a topic related to the cloze passage. However, no significant correlations were found among the two tasks. This was explained as the cloze test was measuring verbal **ability, not overall writing ability.**⁽⁴⁸⁾

Hanania and Shikhani (1986) examine the cloze which combines the advantages of integrative testing and objective scoring as a supplement to a standardized ESL test and as an alternative to a written composition test.

In their study, the students were given three tests, the AUB English test, a cloze test and a written composition. The aim was to make a direct study of interrelationships among the three tests. Analysis of the test scores showed that correlations were all high. It was also possible to make a prediction of communicative language proficiency, as measured by the composition test scores. A correlation between the cloze and writing tests was found which suggested that these tests may measure in common some aspects of language ability beyond those that they share with a standardized ESL test.⁽⁴⁹⁾

Our study gives the correlation of .374 which is quite low but still not ignorable. This is clearly a case to add more writing work and serious writing in the course for the students. This also proves our third hypothesis to be true – that we expect a low correlation of Cloze and writing. The productive nature of writing and the many skills and abilities that are required are responsible for this result. This has a lot of importance for teachers and syllabus planners.

Table 6.



Conclusions

From our study it was clear that

1. The first hypothesis that reading comprehension has a high correlation with Cloze is proved right. However, the second part of it referring to grammar is not proved right.
2. The vocabulary correlation shows the second hypotheses to be right. On the basis of our study it is not possible to substitute the vocabulary test for the Cloze.
3. Writing which is the mainstay of the work shows a very low correlation with Cloze.

The Correlation between Students' Performance in Cloze Test and Writing Test

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study were the following:

1). If the number of the participants was more than the correlation would probably be strengthened. To strengthen the validity of the correlation, a larger sample would be helpful.

2). If the number of the items in both the discrete-point tests and the cloze test would have been more there might have been stronger correlations between the variables.

Pedagogical Implications

This study has some implications for most people concerned with language tests of proficiency, teaching, and developing materials for EFL and ESL students. It also has a lot for test-makers, language teachers, and syllabus designers.

1. High correlation between the reading comprehension test scores and the Cloze scores in this study is noteworthy. This can be relevant to language testing and language teaching improvement. Cloze tests could well be interchanged for longer reading comprehension tests.

2. It was also noted that reading is one of the important skills that English learners cannot ignore. Reading is a skill that can expand learners' knowledge. The importance of reading in comprehension cannot be over emphasized. So a lot more attention to reading in the class is a must.

3. A point has to be made about vocabulary. In the case of vocabulary, the context is the key all the way. So explaining the context, emphasizing the context, and teaching the students how to use the context for deriving meanings are all important activities the teacher has to involve the students in.

4. The next implication is for language teachers in EFL or ESL settings. It is not recommended to teach language as separate components of the woven whole fabric we call language. It is important to make sure that learners are exposed to integrative samples of language. This is most likely to increase the speed of learning. This by no means advocates total exclusion of discrete points of language in teaching or testing. It can be helpful for learners to reinforce certain important points they need to understand better.

5. The fifth implication is for syllabus designers. As a reaction to the discrete point tests, in recent years, there has been an emphasis on seeing language as an integrated entity. As a result, syllabus designers put emphasis on the discourse level of language knowledge. They tend to relegate the parts of language to a secondary place. Studies like ours urge syllabus designers to include both trends in the materials they develop. They may of course put the holistic view of language as the primary goal and the analytic view of language as the secondary one without totally discarding it.

Suggestions for Further Research

Below are some suggestions for further research.

1. More research is waiting to be done to find the link between reading for Cloze and vocabulary.

2. It has also been found that some learners are not very good at inferring meaning from contexts. Some conclusions can be drawn from this about vocabulary, viz. that causes of vocabulary weakness need to be looked into.

3. Also if we consider inference a 'high level skill' as distinguished from vocabulary as a 'low level skill' (K.Nation) then how does an interaction happen between the two.

4. It is noticeable that more studies need to be done in the area of children's reading processes specially with methods like eye tracing. Such studies would throw light on how children learn

The Correlation between Students' Performance in Cloze Test and Writing Test

vocabulary and on why some don't learn it or find it difficult to learn vocabulary. By inference, the result can be extended to adult learners.

5. The present study worked out the correlation between discrete-point tests of vocabulary and cloze test items of lexical words. To investigate new dimensions of the research question the correlation between discrete-point tests of grammar and cloze test items of both lexical and functional words could be calculated.

6. In this study the participants' were only girls. A study with boys may also give interesting results.

7. Our study shows that the students' grammar correlation with Cloze is not very high. In other words, it affects reading in Cloze. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers give more explanation and practice about grammar. This is likely to help the researcher and the teachers and students.

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- ¹⁷-Ibid., 118.
- ¹⁸-Mc Kamey,115.
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