

First and Second Language Reading Strategies: Evidence from Cloze

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In a variety of different studies, cloze tests have been used to examine the similarities and differences between native and nonnative speakers' performance on the same task and across languages. In the present study, in addition to using cloze tests to examine native and nonnative speakers' performance both on the same task and across languages, cloze performance is examined as a window on native and nonnative readers' strategies. The performances of native speakers of Chinese and of English on a random deletion cloze in their native language, and, in the case of the Chinese, also in English as a second language were closely examined for what they reveal about native and nonnative readers' strategies and about reading in the two different languages. Results indicate that native and nonnative speakers perform similarly on cloze in a given language (English) – that native and nonnative speakers seem to use the same strategies on cloze in English – and that readers perform differently in different languages (Chinese and English). Chinese and English readers' responses tended to be similar in English, with differences due to whether the language was the reader's native or foreign language. However, Chinese readers' responses were not similar on the Chinese and English clozes.

INTRODUCTION

Cloze tests, originally introduced as a method for testing the readability of text, are often used as measures of language proficiency and reading comprehension. The traditional cloze procedure is a technique in which every *n*th word of a text is deleted, and the reader's task is to reconstruct the text by filling in the blanks. Because a cloze task requires the reader to supply words that are appropriate morphologically, syntactically and semantically, cloze tests are assumed to be a good measure of language proficiency. And, because a cloze task forces the reader to use context to predict meaning (i.e., the appropriate word), cloze tests are also assumed to mirror and measure reading comprehension.

Much discussion of cloze tests has focused on the question of whether cloze is sensitive to intersentential phenomena or whether it can only provide information about lower order skills, such as clause-level syntactic phenomena. If the cloze is to be accepted as a valid test of reading comprehension, then it must also measure

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