

**MULTIPLE-CHOICE AND CLOZE PROCEDURES IN  
READING TESTS: WHAT DO THEY REALLY MEASURE?  
Múltipla escolha e procedimentos “cloze” em testes de leitura:  
o que eles realmente mensuram?**

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**Abstract:**

*This article presents the results of a study carried out from July 1995 to August 1996, with the aim of finding out what mental process(es) a testee goes through while taking multiple-choice and cloze test. Twenty-three proficient non-native English speakers were asked to answer three multiple-choice tests and one cloze test, and write a report on how they reached the answers. Two flow-charts of strategies used to achieve the correct answers were then designed. It was found that not only do testees use reading strategies but they also get engaged in a complex task of designing strategies to arrive at the correct answers.*

**Key-words:** tests, multiple choice; cloze; assessment; reading strategies; testing strategies

**Resumo:**

*Este artigo apresenta os resultados de um estudo feito de julho de 1995 a agosto de 1996, com o objetivo de investigar quais são os processos mentais que um examinando atravessa quando submetido a um teste de múltipla escolha e cloze. Vinte e três informantes – não nativos, mas proficientes na língua inglesa, responderam três testes de múltipla escolha e um teste cloze, e logo a seguir, escreveram um relatório como o processos que eles utilizaram para chegar a respostas corretas. Dois fluxogramas das estratégias utilizadas pelos examinandos para atingirem as respostas corretas foram desenvolvidas. Chegou-se a conclusão de que os examinandos não somente utilizaram estratégias de leitura, mas também se engajaram numa árdua e complexa tarefa de desenvolver outras estratégias para chegarem as respostas corretas.*

**Palavras-chave:** testes, múltipla escolha, cloze, avaliação, estratégias de leitura e estratégias de testes.



## 1. Introduction

Although we are in the communicative era of language teaching/ learning, multiple-choice and cloze tests, which are considered instruments of measurement belonging to either the psychometric-structuralist or psycholinguistic-sociolinguistic era (Weir 1990) , are still used in Brazil to measure reading comprehension. However, since little is known in terms of a psycholinguistic perspective it is often questioned whether these tests are efficient instruments to measure reading comprehension.

The problem of test measurement error is particularly relevant in relation to the reading skill, because there is no obvious measurable product. The reading skill differs from the writing and speaking skills in that we cannot perceive a reader's performance whereas the performance of writers and speakers is fully observable. This makes measurement of the reading skill a difficult issue.

## 2. The Study

Twenty-three Brazilian informants who have the Cambridge Proficiency Certificate were asked to take three multiple-choice tests and one cloze test, and to write two reports (see Appendix 3) – one for each type of test. Although the informants were proficient English speakers, all the instructions on how to write the report were given in Portuguese. The informants did not have any previous knowledge about the purpose of the study.

## 3. The Test

### *The multiple-choice tests*

Three multiple-choice tests were chosen from 'the University of Cambridge International Examinations' – Certificate of Proficiency in English – June 16, 1993 (see appendix 1). The first text – passage



one (406 words) – was about the relationship between an old man and his child; the second text – passage two (333 words) – was about the writing process; the third text – passage three (351 words) – was about TV advertisements. Each text was followed by 5 multiple-choice questions, each question containing 4 alternatives of which only one was the correct answer. By the end of the three multiple-choice tests each informant had therefore answered a total of 15 questions.

### *The cloze test*

For the cloze test we used a text selected from the Cambridge Proficiency Examinations. However, the deletion procedure was altered: the Cambridge Proficiency test followed a rational deletion criterion also called ‘variable-ratio method’ (Oller 1986:345). According to Weir (1990:48) this criterion is used when items are selected for deletion based on what is known about language, about text difficulty and about the way language works in a particular text. Since the intention of this research was to deal with the fixed-ratio method (Oller – 1986:345), i.e. when the deletion rate is mechanically set, usually between every fifth and eleventh word, we decided to keep the text and change the rational criterion to fixed-ratio deletion, deleting every 6th word. Twenty words were deleted. The first sentence as well as the last two were left intact so that the testee could have a better idea of what the text was about. The topic was about ‘Illiteracy’ (219 words), which can be assumed to be part of the testees’ knowledge of the world (see appendix 2). The informants were instructed to fill in the blanks with only one word and to read the whole text before starting to answer it. Since none of the texts were on topics unfamiliar to the testees we assume that they were not excessively difficult, such that the reader could not understand the message.

### *The written report*

Together with the tests a separate handout (see appendix 3) was designed with the following information:



- a) Instructions about what was expected from the informants, i.e. they would have to read the texts, answer the questions in the multiple-choice tests and fill in the blanks in the cloze. As soon as they finished each test, they had to go to the handout and write about how they arrived at each answer, i.e. the mental process they went through in order to answer the questions or fill in the blanks.
- b) Directly after the instructions, there was a guideline containing questions which showed the subjects some possible procedures someone may adopt when reading, and some other procedures a test-wise candidate may adopt when taking a test. They were asked to use the guideline just for reference: they were not supposed to answer the questions. Both the instructions and guidelines came before the space provided for the testees to write their comments on each item. There was one set of instructions and guidelines for the multiple-choice tests and another set for the cloze test. This part was read out loud together with the informants so they could ask any questions about the task they would have to perform. They were also instructed not to stop in the middle of a test – they had to take one test and soon afterwards write about each question. Breaks between tests were allowed.

#### 4. Results

The results of this study were compiled into two flow-charts<sup>1</sup>: one based on the information of the multiple-choice data and the other based on the information of the cloze data. It was a complex task to compile every bit of information into categories and then into flow-charts and the analysis of the reports may be open to other interpretations.

In the great majority of the answers given, 99.5%, the informants started off by *skimming the text*, whereas in very few of the cases, less than 1%, they decided to *read the stems and alternatives before*

<sup>1</sup> Flow-chart 1 also shows how micro-skills and test-wiseness techniques were combined to compose different kinds of strategies which test-takers used in order to achieve the correct answers in the multiple-choice tests.



*skimming* which was obviously an exception. In the latter case this minority continued their strategies by then *skimming the text* (>1%) followed by the *elimination of alternatives* (>1%), *regressing* again to certain parts of the text in order to *scan* and *try to locate information* which could help them *deduce the answer from contextual cues* (>1%). In the large number of cases where the informants *skimmed the text* first, the informants continued by adopting the test-wiseness technique *reading the question/alternatives after skimming*. From this step on, six different micro-skills and test-wiseness techniques gave rise to the development of six major strategies, which were divided into minor strategies.

The first major strategy, which began with the micro-skill *regression*, was used in 52.6% of the correct answers. After this micro-skill the test-takers continued by then *scanning the text* (52.6%), *to search for specific information* in order to either find cues and *eliminate more alternatives* (23.9%), *deduce the answers from contextual cues* (22.2%), or *regress* again (5.7%) to some parts of the text. In the majority of cases those who chose to *eliminate alternatives* (23.9%) continued their strategy by *deducing the answers from contextual cues* (19.1%). Some of them decided to take a longer path instead, *regressing* (3.5%) to parts of the text in order to *scan* (3.5%) and *find specific information* to help them *eliminate alternatives* (3%) so they could, from then on, either *deduce the answers from contextual cues* (2.6%) or *regress* for the third time (>1%). The testees who *regressed* continued by *scanning* (>1%) to locate cues and *eliminate alternatives* so they could *deduce the answers from contextual cues* (>1%).

In cases where the test-takers *deduced the answers from contextual cues* (22.2%), they were able to find some information while *scanning* in order to give a definite answer.

The cases in which the test-takers opted to *regress* again were quite few (5.7%). In such cases they continued by *scanning the text in order to search for information* so that they could take three different paths. In the first, informants decided to *regress* (3.5%) again to some parts of the text to *scan* (3.5%) and from then on either *deduce the answers from contextual cues* (1.7%) or *eliminate alternatives* (1.3%). Those who *eliminated alternatives* ended the strategy by *deducing the*



*answers from contextual cues* (1.3%). In the other two cases, which represent an exception, the informants either inferred the answers from their *knowledge of the world* (>1%) or *deduced the answers from contextual cues* (>1%).

The second major strategy, which began with the micro-skill *reading the stems/alternatives*, was adopted by testees who decided to *answer the question straight from skimming* (27.8%). Of this percentage, in only a very few of the answers did the informants (2.6%) decide to *regress* to the text in order to *scan and find information to confirm their answers*.

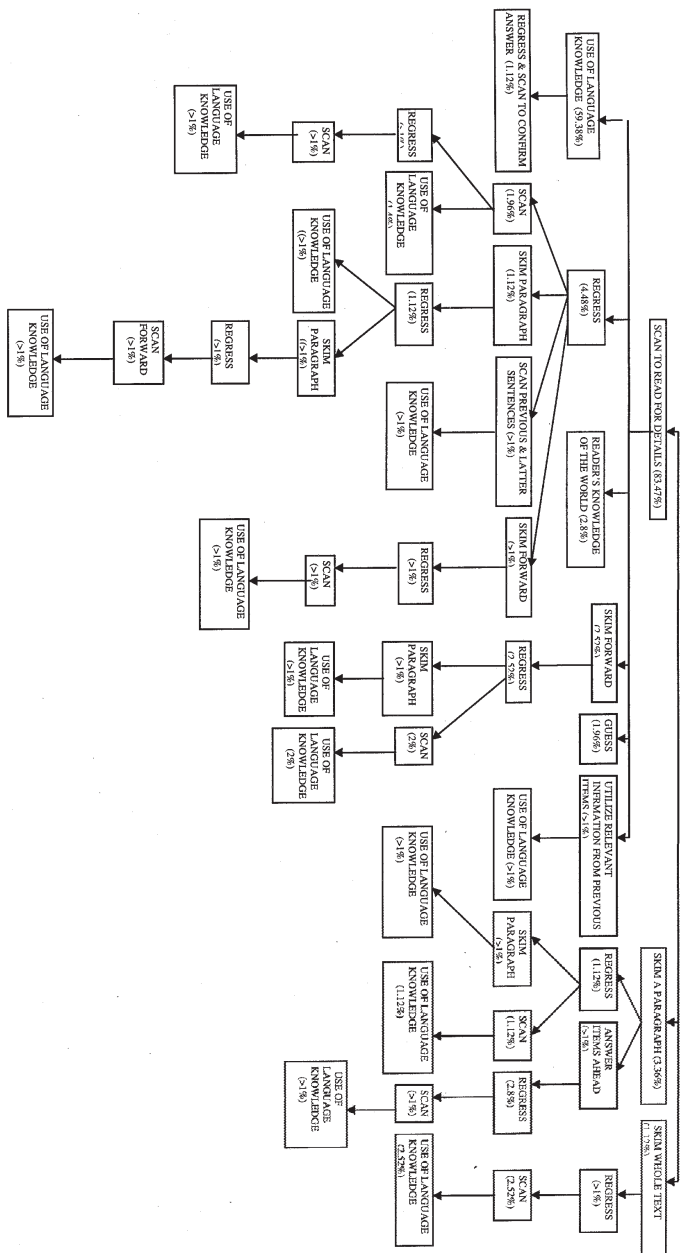
The third major strategy started off with the test-wiseness technique *elimination of alternatives* (16.9%). From this point on, in 9.1% of the answers, the informants were ready to answer *straight from skimming*, while in 6.9% of the answers the test-takers had to *regress* to the text to *scan* and from then on either *deduce the answer from contextual cues* (6%) or *regress again to scan* (1.3%) and look for information. They continued by either *eliminating alternatives* (>1%), so they could *deduce the answer from contextual cues* (>1%) or *regressing* (>1%) and *scanning* (>1%) for the third time to find information which enabled them to *deduce the answers from contextual cues*. (>1%).

The fourth, fifth and sixth major strategies were followed by testees who decided to continue their paths after having *read the stems/alternatives*. Very few informants used these strategies to reach their answers: less than 1% of the answers given. Some informants answered the question with the *help of previous questions*. Others decided to *eliminate improbable alternatives until they were left with only one correct alternative*. The third group *utilized relevant information from subsequent test items* followed by *regression and scanning, eliminating alternatives and deducing answers from contextual cues*.

#### 4.1 The cloze test

Flow-chart of strategies found in the cloze test.

FLOW CHART 2: STRATEGIES USED IN CLOZE TESTS







Flow-chart 2 shows how the informants arrived at the correct answers by using different strategies.

In 83.47% of the answers given, the informants started their tests by *scanning in order to read for details*, as against a minority who took two different paths. In 3.36% of the cases, the informants started their tests by *skimming one paragraph*. In only 1.12% of the answers given did the test-takers start by *skimming the whole text*.

In the majority of the cases, the informants who began by *scanning to read for details* continued their strategies by taking six different paths:

First, 59.38% of the correct answers were reached by informants who used *language knowledge* to complete the blanks. Few of the the answers (1.12%) were reached by informants who decided to *regress and scan to confirm the answers*.

Secondly, in a minority of the cases (4.48%), the informants *regressed to parts of the text* and from there on took four other paths: 1.96% of the answers were achieved by informants who *scanned* to locate specific information which could help them, together with the *use of language knowledge* (1.4%), to complete the blanks. In less than 1% of the cases, the informants decided to *regress again and scan* to locate specific information and *use their knowledge of the language* to come to an answer. In other answers (1.12%) the informants *skimmed the paragraph, regressed* (1.12%) to parts of the text to either *use knowledge of the language* (>1%) to come to an answer or *skim the paragraph* (>1%) again. From then on less than 1% of the answers were reached by *regressing* for the third time. Then they decided to *skim forward* (>1%) in order to find clues so they could *use their knowledge of the language* (>1%) and complete the blank. In a small minority of the answers given, less than 1%, informants *scanned previous and later sentences* so they could find cues and *use knowledge of the language* to arrive at an answer. In other cases still, (>1%), the informants decided to *skim forward* and then *regress* in order to *scan and locate cues to use knowledge of language* in order to complete their strategy.

Thirdly, in a minority of the answers given – 2.8% – the informants answered the blanks based on their *knowledge of the world*.

Fourthly, in 2.52% of the cases, the informants *skimmed forward, regressed* (2.52%) to either *scan* (>1%) to locate specific cues so they could use their *knowledge of the language* (>1%) to answer the items or to *skim a paragraph* (>1%) and from then on use *knowledge of the language* (>1%) to answer the item adequately.

Fifthly, in 1.96% of the answers given, the informants claimed to have *guessed* the correct answers.

And finally, in less than 1% of the answers given, the informants claimed to have *utilized relevant information from previous items* to find cues which could lead them to use their *knowledge of the language* and answer the items correctly.

The testees who decided to start answering the test by *skimming a paragraph* (3.36%) took two other paths. Some (2.8%) *regressed* in order to *scan* (2.52 %) and locate information which could lead them to *use knowledge of language* (2.52%) and complete the blanks. Others *skimmed a paragraph* (>1%) to be able to make *use of language knowledge* (>1%) and answer the test. In less than 1% of the cases, the informants *answered items ahead*, followed by *regression and scanning*, and finally made *use of their language knowledge* to complete the blanks.

The third group's answers were achieved by testees who started their tests by *skimming the whole text* (1.12%). They continued by *regressing* (1.12%), *scanning* (1.12%) and *using knowledge of the language* (1.12%) to reach the correct answers.

Again, if we view the flow-chart as a whole we may conclude that since there are various different strategies a test-taker can adopt in order to reach a correct answer, the percentage of frequency of these strategies tends to decrease owing to the various paths one can take.



#### 4.2 Comparison of multiple-choice with cloze tests

Multiple-choice and cloze procedures lead test-takers to use strategies which are peculiar to each test type. In multiple-choice tests subjects tended to use strategies which included micro-skills and test-wiseness techniques such as *skimming the whole text* (99.5%), and *reading alternatives after skimming* (99.5%). We may see that in this type of test there are three main typical branches a test-taker follows after reading alternatives after skimming: *regression* (52.6%), *answering straight from skimming* (27.8%) and *elimination of alternatives* (16.9%). In the cloze test, subjects tended to start their strategies using micro-skills such as *scanning to read for details* (83.47%) and *use of language knowledge* (59.38%). The comparison of the two flow-charts shows that the combination of the micro-skills and test-wiseness techniques into strategies is peculiar to each kind of test. Each type of test led test-takers to use particular strategies because of the format of these tests, that is, the way and order in which they are arranged and presented. Therefore, there are no strategies which are common to both tests. That is to say, the strategies used to answer multiple-choice or cloze tests consist of either different ordering of micro-skills and test-wiseness techniques which are common to both tests, or different ordering of these skills and techniques which is specific to each test. Consequently, the strategies these test-takers used in order to reach the correct answers were peculiar to each type of test.

#### 4.3 Comparison of current reading process theories with strategies used in multiple-choice and cloze tests

Current reading process theories were compared with the strategies used in multiple-choice and cloze tests, as identified in this research.

When comparing the reading process described by different theoreticians to the test-taking strategies, we were able to perceive that both multiple-choice and cloze reading comprehension tests demanded a tremendous effort from the testees: much more than if they were merely

reading the text. The figure below shows the paths readers take when simply reading or when taking multiple-choice and cloze reading comprehension tests.

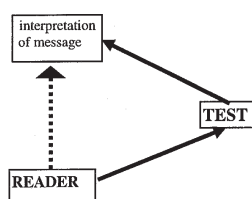


Figure 1: The paths readers take when simply reading (-----) and when taking a multiple-choice or cloze reading comprehension test (—).

We can notice that when testees take a multiple-choice or cloze test, the path they take in order to interpret the message is different from a common interactive approach to reading. While reading a text, the reader only concentrates on reading strategies that will enable him to interpret the text, whereas when a testee takes a reading test, not only will he be concerned about interpreting the text, but he will also need to develop other strategies, usually test-wiseness techniques, to be able to interpret the text as well as to find the correct or best answer. Therefore, the path testees take to interpret a text is longer than the path an ordinary reader takes because he will have developed not only reading strategies, but also test-wiseness techniques: combining and ordering them in different ways. In the flow-chart of the cloze test, we can perceive that all the strategies end with the micro-skill ‘knowledge of the language’. This indicates that the test-takers concentrate their reading on a ‘visual’ (bottom-up) level. Therefore, if we consider Smith’s (1978) process of reading we will see that the testee utilizes more ‘visual’ than ‘non-visual information’. This causes overloading of short-term memory and consequently a ‘bottleneck effect’<sup>2</sup> and then ‘tunnel vision’<sup>3</sup>. If we

<sup>2</sup> There is a trade-off between visual and non-visual information; however, there is a limit to how much visual information the brain can deal with in making sense of print. This limitation is called the bottleneck effect. “Insufficiency of non-visual information can even make reading impossible, for the simple but inescapable reason that there is a limit to how much visual information the brain can handle at any one time. There is a bottleneck in the visual system between eye and brain.” (Smith, 1978 p.6)

<sup>3</sup> “Tunnel vision is a result of trying to process too much visual information at a same time. Tunnel vision is very similar to trying to examine the world through a narrow paper tube. (Smith 1978 p31)



consider Goodman's model of reading<sup>4</sup> (1988) we can also perceive that when a testee is taking a cloze test he spends more time on the 'optical', 'perceptual' and 'syntactic' cycle, neglecting 'meaning'. This means that more time is spent on the attempt to fill in the blanks than on actually comprehending the message of the text as a whole. If we concentrate on Rumelhart's view of the reading process<sup>5</sup>, we will see that people taking a cloze test devote too much time to 'syntactic' and 'semantic knowledge', making the 'pattern synthesizer' unstable in

<sup>4</sup> Goodman (1988:17) reorganized his model of reading as follows:

Optical :

Scan in direction of print display;  
Fix-focus eyes at point in the print

Perception:

Sample-select. Choose cues from available graphic display;  
Feature analysis. Choose features necessary to choose from alternate letters, words, structures.  
Image formation. Form image of what is seen, and expected to be seen.  
Compare with expectations.

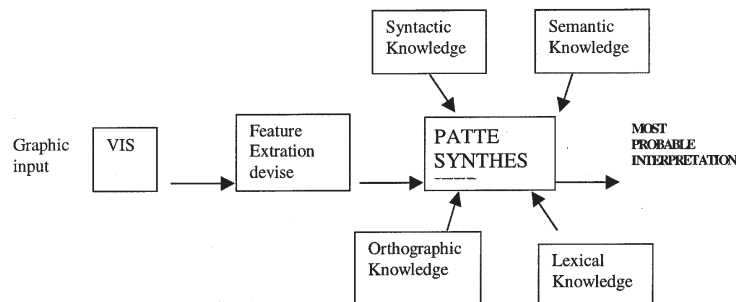
Syntactic cycle:

Assign internal surface structure;  
Assign deep structure. Seek clauses and their interrelationship.

Construct meaning:

Decode;  
Assimilate/accommodate. If possible, assimilate, if not, accommodate prior meaning.

<sup>5</sup> In his model information from syntactic, semantic, lexical and orthographic sources converges upon a pattern synthesizer. These knowledge sources all together provide input which is stored in a 'message center' (pattern synthesizer). Successful reading occurs when higher-order stages are able to influence the processing of lower-order stages: there is the interaction between knowledge of the world and the synthesized patterns of lexical, syntactic and orthographic information.





the sense that, instead of quickly analyzing the features in four ways (syntactic, semantic, orthographic and lexical) they spend too much time on two of them: 'syntactic and semantic'. Now if we look at Stanovich's model of reading<sup>6</sup>, we perceive that test-takers of a cloze test work almost exclusively on the knowledge of the language (bottom-up process), breaking the interaction with the knowledge of the subject and world (top-down process).

Multiple-choice tests also present problems. If we compare the models of Goodman (1988), Rumelhart (1977), Stanovich (1988) and Eskey (1988)<sup>7</sup> with flow chart 1 we notice that, besides getting engaged in an interactive form of reading, multiple-choice test-takers also get trapped in the arduous task of choosing a correct alternative to a question. Some items make testees regress to the text and read it in an interactive way. For instance, item #1 in the first passage causes testees to return to the text and re-read paragraph one in such a way that they are able to apprehend the general meaning of that part. Other items induce testees to carry out a bottom-up analysis of the text. For instance, in item #10 in passage two the testee inevitably has to find and understand the word 'nowadays' in order to arrive at the correct alternative. Sometimes the answers are found in one single sentence as in item #14 in passage three ('America sells the steak, while Britain sells the sizzle'). We will have an interactive form of reading in multiple-choice tests, depending on the nature of each question. Some questions will lead to an interactive approach while others will narrow the process down to the bottom-up

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<sup>6</sup> Stanovich states that a key concept of a reading model is that a process at any level can compensate for deficiencies at any other level. Therefore, if a good reader is faced with a text where he is not acquainted with the topic or has little or no background knowledge, he will compensate for the deficiencies by relying more on the linguistic information the text offers, such as lexical, syntactic, and semantic knowledge. If, on the other hand, a good reader is faced with a text in which the subject is very familiar, he will consequently rely more on his prior information of the subject in order to reconstruct the message.

<sup>7</sup> In this model a proficient reader both decodes and interprets a text. Decoding, here, consists of skills which become more automatic but no less important as the reading skill develops, and therefore, should not be underestimated. "The interactive model does not presuppose the primacy of top-down processing skills – the gradual replacing of painful word-by-word decoding with educated guessing based on the minimal visual cues – but rather posits a constant interaction between bottom-up and top-down processing in reading, each source of information contributing to a comprehensive reconstruction of the meaning of a text." (Eskey, 1989:94)



level as described in connection with the cloze tests. However, even though a test writer spends time and effort pre-testing and analyzing the items, multiple-choice tests continue to encourage the use of test-wisness strategies which may lower the validity of this kind of test.

We can therefore posit that both multiple-choice and cloze tests have low construct validity. Cloze tests induce test-takers to work on their reading comprehension in a bottom-up way. While taking a cloze test, testees usually get so bogged down in the task of analyzing the structures of the sentences in order to find the appropriate missing word that they lose track of the message of the text, which is not the objective when one is attempting to measure reading comprehension. This phenomenon, i.e. the cloze test inducing test-takers to use bottom-up strategies, is understandable if we consider when it was devised. W.L.Taylor introduced the cloze procedure in 1953, at a time when reading was first analyzed into its basic parts, which were then taught separately. For instance, readers had to identify individual letters, building them up to words, sentences and then paragraphs. The cloze procedure reflects the philosophy of that period. It makes a testee work at word level rather than at text level. Multiple-choice tests have low construct validity because the test-takers have to concentrate on composing strategies which enable them to select the correct alternative rather than on normal reading strategies.

## 5. Conclusion

Some conclusions could be drawn from this study. Firstly, it was found that multiple-choice and cloze tests each cause test-takers to use particular strategies in order to reach the correct answers, although some strategies are composed of micro-skills and test-wisness techniques which are common to both types of test.

Secondly, both multiple-choice and cloze tests demand more than reading abilities: they cause test-takers to use strategies which are specific to each type of test. Students taking multiple-choice and cloze tests not only become engaged, even if partially, in the reading process as described by Smith (1978a, 1978b), Goodman (1976), Eskey (1989),

Rumelhart (1977) and Stanovich (1980), but also in a test-taking process which demands the use of particular test-taking strategies (specific to each test) in order to reach their objective of arriving at the correct answers.

Finally, construct validity appears to be low in multiple-choice and cloze tests since they induce test-takers to use test-wiseness techniques, which is not what these tests are intended to measure.

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## APPENDIX 01 – THE MULTIPLE-CHOICE TESTS

*according to the passage. On your answer sheet, indicate the letter A, B, C or D against the number of each item 1 to 15 for the answer you choose. Give **one answer only** to each question. Read each passage right through before choosing your answers.*

### FIRST PASSAGE

Mr. Handforth in his old age, in his second childhood – advanced by his stroke – had kept his wits about him, and they, as old people’s wits sometimes will, inclined him to be critical of those who were nearest and dearest to him.

Undoubtedly, it was Judith who was – or who had been – nearest and dearest to him. Throughout the many years of his widowhood – how many! – she had been at his beck and call, neglecting, as she herself had said and as he had had ample opportunities of confirming, her own family and her own affairs to console him in his solitude. She had even suggested, and he had gratefully though guiltily agreed to her suggestion, that her family would have been larger than it was, that Charlotte might have had brothers and sisters, as Seymour hoped she would have, if she had not felt that her father was her first priority.

This combined feeling of guilt and gratitude he had tried to acknowledge to her from time to time, by presents smaller and greater; and he had made and re-made his will many times, with the object of leaving the residue of his estate, already much reduced by Judith’s inroads on it, in unequal shares, to Judith and Hester – shares that should seem equal, though they were not. Thus he got his house and its contents valued at a very low figure, well knowing that it would be worth far more at his death, to balance a rather higher figure of shares to Hester, the value of which he had good reason for thinking would go down rather than up.

Not that he was not fond of Hester, but in his mind and affections she had always played second fiddle to her sister; though younger, she



had married earlier; like an almost unfledged bird she had abandoned the nest, and made another for herself far, far away. It was natural, of course; Jack had swept her off her feet, she had thrown in her lot with him, leaving her father to Judith's very tender mercies.

How can one feel towards someone who, for the most natural reasons in the world, has thrown one over as one feels towards someone who, for the best reasons in the world, has stayed by one's side?

But were they the best reasons in the world? No, Mr. Handforth decided, they were the worst; everything his daughter Judith had done for him, all her kindness and her assiduous attentions when he had been alone and/or ill, had been inspired by one motive, and only one: the greed of gain. At last she had shown herself in her true colors – the colors, whatever they were, of a vampire.

01. In paragraph two the author implies that Judith helped her father
- A without expecting any gratitude.
  - B while ensuring that he recognized her sacrifice.
  - C because she felt her family came first.
  - D simple out of daughterly affection.
02. Which phrase describes Judith's character in an ironic way?
- A "Judith's very tender mercies" (lines 21-22)
  - B "her kindness and her assiduous attentions" (line 26)
  - C "the greed of grain" (line 27)
  - D "her true colors" (line 28)
03. In his will Mr Handforth intended to
- A reward Judith for her sacrifices.
  - B be fair to both sisters.
  - C show Judith he had noticed her greed.
  - D give Judith less than Hester.



04. He considered that Hester
- A had treated him badly
  - B did not feel anything for him.
  - C had acted reasonably.
  - D had got what she deserved.
05. His skeptical view of Judith
- A had always been kept secret.
  - B had come about suddenly.
  - C continued to shock him.
  - D was encouraged by Hester.

## SECOND PASSAGE

Writers learn as apprentices do except that they have no master to work for except themselves and the market.

The fact is that writing is an empirical art, which can only be learned by doing it. This fact is no reflection on the art of writing. Because skill is acquired in a seemingly haphazard way, it is none the worse, indeed sometimes the better, for it. As in every art you must have at least the foundation of a gift, without which it is useless to proceed; but if the foundation exists, then success—not merely economic—is largely a matter of persistence and of making the most of opportunities. Experience is a hard school. Wastage among aspiring writers is high and most survivors have to rely on another job. The pros and cons of that situation are debatable. Working out in the world is not solely a form of insurance; it can also be a vital source of material and incentive, particularly for the fiction writer. Many well-known authors labored away at other jobs for part or all of their lives, and either profited therefrom or made their names notwithstanding.

Economic security fresh the mind from worry, but a routine job also consumes mental energy which might otherwise be harnessed to



creative output. This applies as much to journalism and other ancillary activities of authorship as to non-literary employment. A regular stint of reviewing, reading manuscripts for publishers, broadcasting, lecturing, and the like, may oil the machinery of the mind, but it may also use up horsepower to the point of exhaustion. Moreover, continuity of creation is often vital – whether for the construction of a work of fiction or for historical research or, indeed, for any idea that has to be digested into literary form. Interruptions nowadays, however, are a professional hazard that all authors have to contend with, but they are not insuperable and not the worst threat to a living literature.

06. According to the author, how is the skill of writing acquired?
- A by methodical practice.
  - B by studying the market.
  - C by following another writer's example.
  - D by producing one's own work.
07. In the author's opinion, it is impossible to become a successful writer without
- A some talent.
  - B early publication.
  - C another source of income.
  - D consideration for the reader.
08. How does the author regard a writer's second job?
- A usually harmful to one's writing.
  - B essential in most cases.
  - C too time-consuming.
  - D helpful in researching facts.
09. How might a second job damage a writer?
- A by restricting his imagination.
  - B by using up his mental strength.
  - C by destroying his talent.
  - D by removing the need to write.



10. How do modern writers differ from those of the past?
- A They have less mental energy.
  - B They need to rely on another job.
  - C They cannot expect to work without interruption.
  - D They learn their art more thoroughly.

### THIRD PASSAGE

In a world increasingly fearsome and fragile, TV commercials represent an oasis of calm and reassurance. For six minutes in every hour, viewers know that they will be wafted away from this cruel world into an idealized well-ordered land. You and I may experience real-life as largely harassed and chaotic but in the world of the TV commercials happy families may be relied upon to gather at breakfast-time for convivial bowls of cornflakes, their teeth free of decay, their hair innocent of dandruff, their shirts whiter than snow.

TV advertising in Britain, obsessed with the symbols of the good life, exploits a yearning for evidence of old-fashioned security. Things were better in the old days: bread was crusty and beer was a man's drink. But in selling the idea of a better life, it strikes me that most British commercials fail in their primary function. I cannot be alone among those who usually remembers everything about TV advertising except the product it is designed to publicize.

In one superb commercial, a distinguished-looking Italian butler drives a car headlong into a vast dining-hall to serve champagne. What on earth was it selling? The champagne? The car? What car? Search me. Viewers reveled in the medium and forgot the message. American advertisers don't make such mistakes. A typical U.S. commercial features a woman in a kitchen holding a highly-visible bottle of something or other and selling it hard. No art, no craft, just the message. America sells the steak, while Britain sells the sizzle.

A nation needs symbols. We need proof that lovely things still endure, like a team of shire horses criss-crossing the landscape at sundown. We want to be reminded that they still exist, that we may still



come across pockets of sanity and beauty in a world less sane and less beautiful each day. TV commercials provide us with those symbols. They provide a link with the way we like to think we were. They help us keep in touch with lost innocence.

11. Families in TV commercials are usually depicted as
  - A self-indulgent.
  - B wealthy.
  - C idealistic.
  - D carefree.
  
12. British TV advertising concentrates on
  - A the appearance of the product.
  - B the emotional needs of its audience.
  - C the quality of modern life.
  - D the need for good quality products.
  
13. What does the writer think of the car commercial?
  - A It was too long.
  - B It did not achieve its main aim.
  - C It lacked originality.
  - D It was poorly produced.
  
14. How are British commercials different from American ones?
  - A They adopt a more subtle approach.
  - B They are generally of a lower standard.
  - C They are more expensively produced.
  - D They communicate more effectively.
  
15. In the last paragraph, the writer suggests that British TV advertising
  - A accurately reflects modern life.
  - B is too old-fashioned.
  - C fulfils a useful function.
  - D concentrates on unimportant things.

**APPENDIX 2 – THE CLOZE TEST**

1. Fill each of the numbered blanks in the passage with one suitable word.

**ILLITERACY**

Illiteracy may be considered more as an abstract concept than a condition.

When a famous English writer (1)\_\_\_\_\_ the word over two hundred (2) \_\_\_\_\_ ago, he was actually referring (3) \_\_\_\_\_ people who could not read (4)\_\_\_\_\_ or Latin. However, it seems (5)\_\_\_\_\_ that university examiners had this (6) \_\_\_\_\_ of disability in mind when (7)\_\_\_\_\_ reported on ‘creeping illiteracy’ in a (8)\_\_\_\_\_ on their students’ final examination in 1988.

Over the years, university lecturers (9)\_\_\_\_\_ become aware of an increasing (10)\_\_\_\_\_ towards grammatical sloppiness, poor spelling (11)\_\_\_\_\_ general imprecision in their students’ (12)\_\_\_\_\_ of writing; and sloppy writing (13)\_\_\_\_\_ all too often a reflection (14)\_\_\_\_\_ sloppy thinking. Their complaint was (15)\_\_\_\_\_ they had enough to do (16)\_\_\_\_\_ their own subject without teaching (17)\_\_\_\_\_ undergraduates to write.





Some lecturers believe that they (18)\_\_\_\_\_ a duty to stress the (19)\_\_\_\_\_ of maintaining standards of clear (20)\_\_\_\_\_ through the written word in a world dominated by visual communications and images. They insist on the connection between clear thinking and a form of writing that is not only clear, but also sensitive to subtleties of meaning. The same lecturers argue that undergraduates appear to be the victims of a ‘softening process’ that begins with the teaching of English in schools, but this point of view has, not surprisingly, caused a great deal of controversy.

### **APPENDIX 3 -THE WRITTEN REPORT**

Curitiba, November 1, 1995

Dear colleague,

Thank you so much for agreeing to help me with my research. I'd like you to take three multiple-choice and a cloze tests. When you have answered each question, could you please write in the space provided for each question HOW it was that you arrived at your answer, i.e. what was the mental process you went through to arrive at the answer. Do not take a break while you're working on a particular text. Breaks between texts are alright. You can work on each text whenever you want to. Below are some questions which may serve as a guideline:

**FOR THE MULTIPLE-CHOICE TESTS**

- a) Could you answer a question without having to look back at the text ?
- b) Did you have to read any part of the text more than once in order to understand it? How many times?
- c) If yes, why did you have to go back to a sentence or paragraph and read it more than once?
- d) How familiar were you with the topic of the text? If you were very familiar or familiar with the topic, did it help you answer the question?

If you were not familiar with the topic, did it hinder you from answering a question?

- e) Did you get lost in any part of the text?  
If yes, Where? and Why do you think it happened?
- f) Did you make use of morphology, syntax, structure or any language analysis in order to answer the question/blank? If yes, how?
- g) Was there any answer, in the multiple-choice, that you used the following strategies:
  - eliminate options which are known to be incorrect and choose from among the remaining options.
  - choosing neither or both of two options which imply the correctness of each other – for example, if you are aware that two options describe the same condition then most probably they are being used as distracters.
  - eliminate options that are known to be incorrect or which have no obvious logical association with the text.
  - choose neither or one (but not both) of two statements one of which, if correct, would imply incorrectness of the other – for example, when alternative ‘a’ is obviously the opposite of ‘b’.



- restrict choice to those options which encompass all or two or more given statements known to be correct – if you reduce the number of options that are possible to be correct your chances of getting it correct increases.
- utilize relevant content information in other test items and options – use other questions in the test in order to help you answer the question.

h) Did you use any other strategy (path) to arrive at the answer?

What were there? How did it work?

#### QUESTIONS FOR THE CLOZE TEST

a) Could you answer a question without having to look back or forward in the text ?

b) Did you have to read any part of the text more than once in order to understand it?

How many times?

c) If yes, why did you have to go back to a sentence or paragraph and read it more than once?

d) How familiar were you with the topic of the text?

If you were very familiar or familiar with the topic, did it help you answer the question?

If you were not familiar with the topic, did it hinder you from answering a question?

e) Did you get lost in any part of the text?

Did you fix your eyes at any blank for some time and then lost track of the message?

If yes, Where? and Why do you think it happened?



- f) Did you make use of morphology, syntax, structure or any language analysis in order to answer the question/blank? If yes, how?
- g) Did you use any other strategy (path) to arrive at the answer?  
What were there? How did it work?
- h) While doing the cloze test, were there any blanks that you were not able to answer or answered wrong and after checking the correct answer you found out that the missing word was familiar to you (and even easy) – you would have understood it while reading if it hadn't been deleted

