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Anne M. Ferguson

Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond

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APPLYING THE CLOZE PROCEDURE TO CHILDREN'S BOOK SELECTIONS

Anne M. Ferguson

SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA UNIVERSITY, HAMMOND

This study was designed to determine at what level, as measured by the cloze procedure, sixth grade children selected trade books when a wide selection of books was available.

The sample consisted of one sixth grade class from Springdale, Arkansas. There were thirty subjects which included fourteen boys and sixteen girls. The study was conducted at the end of the school year. The sample was primarily selected on the following criteria:

1. A heterogeneous group that had access to a wide selection of trade books from the school library at least once a week.
2. A heterogeneous group that recently completed the SRA Assessment Survey: Reading, 1971 Edition, from which total reading scores were available for use in ranking.

The principle of self-selection suggests that the child will select books of an appropriate level of difficulty. Therefore, in applying the principle of self-selection to children and their trade book selections, children are able to recognize their own needs, thus selecting trade books they will understand (Olson, 1945).

The cloze procedure was the instrument utilized to determine the level of difficulty (frustration, instructional, or independent) at which the sample selected trade books (Bormuth, 1968). The cloze procedure is a technique implemented by systematically deleting words from a prose passage. The responses, given in the place of the deleted words, are then evaluated, thus reading levels can be assessed (Taylor, 1953).

On three different occasions, the sample of subjects selected trade books from the school library. Before the children read their trade books, they were collected in order that a cloze test could be constructed for each of them. A cloze test for each selection utilizing the every fifth word deletion was constructed. The cloze test was administered and then evaluated. Each cloze test contained fifty deletions. Correct responses out of fifty were totaled and multiplied by two in order to obtain a percentage score. The cloze test lends itself to the identification, through the percentage score obtained, of the functional reading levels. Percentage scores obtained from the subjects' performance on the cloze tests suggested one of the following classifications (Bormuth, 1968):

Frustration level:	below 37 percent
Instructional level:	between 38-57 percent
Independent level:	above 57 percent

Specifically, answers were sought to the following questions in order to fulfill the major purpose of the study:

1. What proportion of sixth grade children selected trade books at frustration, instructional, and independent level when provided with a wide selection of books?
2. Was there a difference between boys and girls in the difficulty level of trade books selected?
3. Was there a difference between high and low achievers in the difficulty level of trade books selected?
4. What types of literature were selected?
5. Were specific authors chosen frequently?

Focusing on the first question, Table I presents the data obtained from the sample of thirty subjects on cloze tests Nos. 1, 2, and 3. The data revealed that more than half of the sample selected trade books at the independent level. Almost all of the remaining sample selected trade books at the instructional level. A very small number (2 subjects) selected books at the frustration level, which only occurred on cloze tests Nos. 1 and 2. The sample tended to be very consistent in selection of trade books at the instructional and independent levels. Cloze tests Nos. 2 and 3 revealed a fluctuation in the sample to progress toward the independent level. The increase could be attributed to a practice effect in performance on the three cloze tests.

TABLE I
Number of Subjects at Each Level on
Cloze Tests Nos. 1, 2, and 3
(N = 30)

Test	Percent of Correct Responses			Total No. of Subjects
	Frustration Below 37%	Instructional Between 38% and 57%	Independent Above 57%	
1	1	13	16	30
2	1	9	20	30
3	0	10	20	30

Table 2 presents the data related to the second question which reveals distinctly that there was no significant difference between boys and girls in the difficulty level of books selected. Both groups (fourteen boys; sixteen girls) tended to progress toward the independent level on cloze tests Nos. 2 and 3. The SRA mean reading grade placement score for the boys was 8.20

TABLE 2

Boys and Girls at Each Level
(14 boys; 16 girls)
(N = 30)

Test	Sex	Frustration Below 37%	Instructional Between 38% and 57%	Independent Above 57%	Mean Percent Score	Standard Deviation	t-test
1	Boys	0	6	8	54.28	11.49	
	Girls	1	7	8	56.00	11.33	
2	Boys	1	6	7	58.00	14.50	
	Girls	0	3	13	64.75	12.51	
3	Boys	0	5	9	62.71	11.30	
	Girls	0	6	11	61.87	12.70	
							!
							-.5338

¹Not significant at .05 level, 28 df (critical value 1.701).

SRA mean grade placement score: boys, 8.20; girls, 7.95

SRA standard deviation: boys, 1.95; girls, 1.99

and for the girls was 7.95 indicating a very small difference in the area of reading achievement. Both groups tended to remain very consistent in selecting books at instructional and independent levels.

Data relevant to the third question is presented in Table 3 showing distinct differences between high and low achievers (8 high; 7 low) in trade book selections at each level. The high group remained consistent in scoring independent level on cloze tests Nos. 1, 2, and 3. The low group fluctuated. On cloze tests Nos. 1 and 2, two subjects were at frustration level. The low group remained primarily at instructional level with three subjects progressing toward independent level on cloze tests Nos. 2 and 3. The high group had a mean grade placement reading score of 10.1, while the low group had 5.5. These scores also revealed a wide range of reading ability between the two groups. Each group had a low standard deviation which indicated little variability in the grade placement reading scores within each group.

In answering question four, the data revealed that out of the ninety books selected by the sample during the study, the majority was fiction. The boys tended to select a wide variety of modern fiction mostly dealing with sports, especially baseball (during the time frame of the study it was

TABLE 3
High and Low Achievers at Each Level
(8 highs; 7 lows)
(N = 15)

Test		Frustration Below 37%	Instructional Between 38% and 57%	Independent Above 57%	Mean Percent Score	Standard Deviation	t-test
1	Highs	0	0	8	64.00	3.85	
	Lows	1	6	0	41.71	5.90	
2	Highs	0	0	8	74.25	6.54	
	Lows	1	4	2	48.00	10.51	
3	Highs	0	0	8	75.25	6.13	
	Lows	0	6	1	49.14	6.30	
							11.35*

*Significant at the .05 level, 13 df (critical value 1.77).

SRA mean grade placement score: highs, 10.1; lows, 5.5

SRA standard deviation: highs, .92; lows, .37

baseball season); girls selected trade books mostly in the area of family chronicles and regional literature. Six Newbery winners were selected at least once. Three Newbery runner-ups were selected at least once. Mystery and Newbery books were among the frequent selections made by both boys and girls.

In answering the fifth question, out of the total of the ninety trade books selected by the sample during the study, the authors chosen frequently and considered popular were Matt Christopher, Laura Ingalls Wilder, and Lois Lenski. Within the sample's total selection of trade books, boys selected predominately those written by male authors while girls selected predominately those written by female authors.

In conclusion, it is reasonable to assume that teachers and librarians can free the child to select trade books on his own for the majority of the sample selected on independent level. The interesting finding in this study is the fact that so few children selected trade books at frustration level. Here again, fears that adults may have, whether they be parents, teachers, or librarians, that children will hinder their reading development because of unwise choices of books appears to be unjustified.

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