

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CLOZE TESTS IN ASSESSING THE SPEAKING/WRITING SKILLS OF UNIVERSITY EFL LEARNERS

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### ANNOTATION

*This article investigates the effectiveness of cloze tests as a tool for evaluating the speaking and writing skills of university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Cloze tests, traditionally associated with reading comprehension, have been adapted to assess a range of language skills. The study explores the adaptability of cloze tests in evaluating oral proficiency through strategically designed audio recordings and their application in assessing writing skills by highlighting the construction of coherent and grammatically correct sentences.*

**Key words:** *cloze test, EFL, assess, speaking skill, writing skill.*

Since the early days of Uzbekistan's independence, care about the harmonic development of the younger generation, its physical moral and spiritual upbringing has become one of the most important priorities of state policy. Reforms in the systems of education in Uzbekistan and the large-scale programs which are aimed at the happy future of our children, are now rendering their true results. The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Miromovich Mirziyoyev in his speech of June 15, 2018 in Tashkent conference that was dedicated to issues of ensuring social justice, preserving the true essence and significance of our sacred religion of Islam, drew special attention to issues of educating the younger generation.

As the head of our state noted, one of the most important issues always worrying us, concern the moral image of our youth, their worldview. Time is rapidly changing today. Who is most aware of these changes? Of course, the youth. Certainly, let the youth keep up with the times. However, at the same time, they should not lose their national identity. Let the idea, of who we are, the descendants of what great ancestors we are always echo in their hearts and call for being committed to national self-consciousness. How will we achieve this? Only through upbringing, upbringing and only upbringing.

In Uzbekistan, English has been applied for any levels. It has been applied from kindergarten up to college. It means that, English is not something new in our country. Many people use it to communicate each other in daily life.

It is known within institutions of higher education that English is taught as a separate subject matter in almost all university fields. Besides, teachers fulfilling this task design the content of language courses by themselves because administrative authorities do not provide them with syllabuses to guide them in what to teach and how. Assessing the skills of EFL/ESL learners has always been an important part of language teaching. In this work, we are going to study to find out whether (and how) cloze tests can contribute to the assessment of speaking and writing skills of students reliably and, most importantly, practically. Today, some institutions in Uzbekistan assess the language levels of students by only measuring their grammatical and vocabulary knowledge in addition to their reading and listening skills. Such institutions overlook measuring speaking and writing skills most of the time as they are very time consuming to test and score. Meanwhile, some of the bigger institutions (for example universities) try to assess the speaking and writing skills of their students with arduous and impractical methods which sometimes may be inadequate to fully test the speaking and writing potentials of their students. Such methods (for example, interviews, portfolios, or essay writing) require so much time and effort that reliable periodic testing of speaking and writing becomes virtually impossible for some institutions.

This article explores the effectiveness of cloze tests in assessing the speaking and writing skills of university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners.

Language assessment is a critical component of language learning and teaching, providing educators with valuable insights into students' proficiency levels. Among the various assessment methods, cloze tests have gained prominence as a tool for evaluating language skills. This article explores the effectiveness of cloze tests in assessing the speaking and writing skills of university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners

#### Understanding cloze tests:

A cloze test is a form of language assessment that involves removing certain words (usually every *n*th word) from a passage or text. The learners are then required to fill in the blanks with appropriate words, demonstrating their comprehension and ability to use language structures in context. Traditionally, cloze tests have been associated with assessing reading comprehension, but their adaptability makes them suitable for evaluating other language skills as well

### Assessing speaking skills:

One might question how a test primarily designed for written language can effectively measure speaking skills. Cloze tests, when appropriately designed, can be adapted to evaluate oral proficiency. For instance, instead of written blanks, instructors can employ audio recordings with gaps for students to fill in, requiring them to comprehend spoken language and respond appropriately.

### Assessing writing skills:

In the context of writing skills, cloze tests provide a unique perspective on a learner's ability to construct coherent and grammatically correct sentences. By strategically removing words, instructors can gauge a student's understanding of syntax, vocabulary, and overall writing proficiency. The ability to complete a cloze test successfully also reflects a student's grasp of context and their capacity to convey meaning through written expression

### Advantages of cloze tests

1. **Adaptability:** Cloze tests can be easily adapted to assess various language skills, including listening, speaking, and writing.
2. **Quick Evaluation:** Cloze tests are efficient and can be quickly administered, making them suitable for assessing a large number of students in a short time.
3. **Diagnostic Tool:** The errors made by students in cloze tests provide valuable diagnostic information for instructors, highlighting specific areas of weakness that need further attention.
4. **Contextual Understanding:** Cloze tests assess not only the knowledge of isolated vocabulary but also the ability to understand and use language in context, mirroring real-life language usage

### Challenges and Considerations:

While cloze tests offer several advantages, it is essential to acknowledge their limitations. The potential for guessing, limited creativity in responses, and the challenge of adapting them to assess higher-order thinking skills are aspects that instructors must consider when utilizing cloze tests in language assessment

### Conclusion

In conclusion, cloze tests can be a valuable tool for assessing the speaking and writing skills of university EFL learners when appropriately designed and administered. Their adaptability and efficiency make them a practical choice for educators seeking to gain insights into various language competencies. However, it is crucial to recognize their limitations and use them in conjunction with other assessment methods for a comprehensive evaluation of language proficiency.

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