

# *The Application of Cohesion Theory in English Cloze Teaching in Senior High School —A Case Study of Ganzhou Middle School*

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**Abstract:** Cloze test, a standard language test, can comprehensively reflect one's language proficiency. However, many students report that cloze filling is more complicated than other question types. Comparing the College Entrance Examination (CEE) in the past decade, discourse analysis ability and understanding of cohesion theory are highly stressed. However, in normal teaching activities, the application of the cohesion theory is unsatisfactory for various reasons. Therefore, appropriate integration of cohesion theory into English cloze teaching in high school has become a significant problem that needs to be solved. This thesis primarily utilizes questionnaires, interviews, and teaching experiments, discussing how to apply cohesion theory in cloze test teaching by analyzing the data using SPSS. The author draws the following conclusions: Most senior high school students lack a sense of cohesion and discourse analysis when solving problems. The application of cohesion theory does effectively strengthen students' ability to answer cloze filling. This article also provides the following enlightenment for teachers: they should consciously integrate cohesion theory with practice, and guide students to apply theoretical knowledge to solve problems. Moreover, teachers should transform teaching philosophy and methods by keeping up with the times.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background

The cloze test first appeared in the 1950s. Wilson Taylor initially originated it to prove the readability of particular discourses. Later, it was included in foreign language teaching and became one type of authorized comprehensive language test.

Throughout the teaching, the author noticed that even though the words and expressions have been explained in teaching, students' performance is still unsatisfactory. Students may lack training about grasping the connotation of the article or understanding the main idea, thus often jumping out of context and being disturbed by other factors such as words in the options. Consequently, it is of

great significance to arouse students' discourse awareness, such as textual cohesion and coherence, that is, to apply the theory of cohesion to regular classes effectively.

## 1.2 Research Design

Assuming that the application of cohesion theory helps improve students' capability to complete the cloze test, a teaching experiment was designed to verify its effectiveness. The subjects of this experiment are 53 students in Grade one class (5), the EC. The author applies the theory of cohesion in the daily teaching process from September 2019 to January 2020 for five months. As a CC, class (1) constitutes a total of 53 people. The students' English proficiency and entrance scores are quite similar, which means that the experimental subjects are comparable.

During the experiment, the EC was exposed to the cohesion theory and was encouraged to apply it to complete cloze tests efficiently. The control group was taught by the traditional teaching method, only the language points being explained in detail. Furthermore, Students in both classes used the "Full-time Ordinary Senior Middle School Textbooks" (compulsory) published by (China) People's Education Publishing House. The teaching progress was the same, and the relevant cloze training exercises were entirely the same. Secondly, each class took seven courses per week, including one, especially about cohesion theory. Students' performance in the first monthly test was used as the pre-test result. The final fill-in result of the January 2020 final exam was used as the post-test results.

## 2. Literature Review

Since Taylor first introduced the concept of the cloze test in 1953, it has made a difference in English language testing, especially as a tool to evaluate students' mastery of language. Cohesion theory values a lot in discourse analysis and problem-solving of cloze. During past decades, scholars, such as Halliday and Hason, have investigated cohesion theory with different scope.

John W. Oller (1975) found that the longer and more complete a text is, the less difficult it is to fill in the blanks. It was the first time that discourse has combined with discourse analysis. Halliday and Hasan (1976) suggested that cohesion theory was existing textual relations that made the full text a discourse, that is, when the connotation of one language element in a discourse needs to depend on another language component, a cohesive relationship arises. Since then, the cohesion theory has further progressed and been applied in language teaching.[1-4]

Cloze test was formally introduced into China's large-scale examinations in 1978 and then included in various language level examinations, such as CEE and various English level exams (including English professional level four and eight, etc.). Huang Guowen (1988) proposed that cohesion is the actual content of discourse analysis in "Summary of Discourse Analysis". Meng Lili (2016) tried to verify that the cohesion theory can successfully boost the students' language performance. [5-9]

Previous research has not given due attention to cohesion theory's application in cloze test teaching, the study set out to confirm that the theory of cohesion is conducive to the teaching of English cloze questions.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

### 3.1 Cohesion Theory

Cohesion emphasizes an association between the lines in a text. This relationship can exist in the same sentence, appear in connected sentences, or even in two corpora that seem unrelated in the

distance. For example, Cecilia bought twenty apples, and she gave half of them to her uncle. In this sentence: “Cecilia” and “her” are somehow connected. If the reader wants to know what “them” refer to, he or she must read the previous content to find the answer.

It means that a complete discourse is not piled up by irrelevant sentences, but an organic combination of several related sentences in order to attain a particular communicative goal. The coherence and readability of an article are related to the various cohesive means used.

### 3.2 English Cloze

English cloze could be used as a test method to verify the mastery of a second language and reading comprehension capability. In the CEE English test, the cloze test is in the form of split selection. A total of 20 blanks are set, each of which holds 1.5 marks, and a total of 30 marks. Meanwhile, four options are provided for each blank. Students are expected to choose the optimum choice to restore the entire discourse. Unlike reading questions, students are not confronted with a complete essay. However, they need to restore a discourse that is factitiously handled. Therefore, it can objectively examine students’ ability to give insight into the texts.

## 4. Data Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter, the results of the statistical analyses of the data collected are presented and discussed in the following.

### 4.1 Analysis of the Pre-experimental Data

#### 4.1.1 Experimental Class and Control Class English Cloze Pre-test Results

The first monthly test results of the EC and CC before the experiment were input into the computer, and the data analysis was performed by SPSS23.0 software.

Analysis of pre-test scores of EC and CC

Table 1: Group statistics of EC and CC in pre-test

Group statistics					
Class		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
pre-test	EC	53	22.05	3.681	0.506
	CC	53	22.02	3.025	0.416

Table 2: Independent samples test of EC and CC in pre-test

Independent Sample Test							
	Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Equal variances assumed	1.717	.193	.043	104	0.996	0.028	0.654
Equal variances Not assumed	-	-	.043	100.240	0.996	0.028	0.654

From Table 1, the sample size of EC and CC are both 53. Before the experiment, the mean value of EC and CC are 22.05 and 22.02 respectively, while the difference is alone 0.03, indicating that the mean value of EC is approximately amount to that of CC, which in other words means that the EC and the CC are basically at the same level.

We can see from Table 2 that, before the application of cohesion theory, the significant value of pre-test in Levene variance homogeneity test is 0.193, which is bigger than 0.05, indicating that that pre-test follows the prerequisites of the independent sample T-test and that the next parameter test can be proceeding. Furthermore, the Sig. (2-tailed) value of the independent sample T test is 0.996, which is bigger than 0.05, which further demonstrates that there is no dramatical difference between EC and CC in the first place, so that the teaching experiment can be carried on.

## 4.2 Data Analysis After Test

### 4.2.1 Analysis of the Post-experimental Data

The final exams result of the EC and CC after the experiment was input into the computer, and the data analysis between the groups was performed by spss23.0 software.

Analysis of post-test scores of EC and CC

Table 3: Group statistics of EC and CC in post-test

Group statistics					
Class		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
post-test	EC	53	23.29	3.728	.512
	CC	53	21.92	3.269	.449

Table 4: Independent samples test of EC and CC in post-test

Independent Sample Test							
	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Equal variances assumed	0.193	0.661	2.008	104	0.047	1.368	0.681
Equal variances Not assumed	-	-	2.008	102.255	0.047	1.368	0.681

As shown in the Table 3, after the teaching experiment, the mean value of EC and CC are 23.29 and 21.92 separately. What is remarkable is that the achievement of the EC is better, as their difference is 1.37 points higher than CC. Through comparison, we can easily notice that the significant value of pre-test in Levene variance homogeneity test is 0.048, which is smaller than 0.05, suggesting that there is a noticeable variance between EC and CC after the application of cohesion theory.

During this period, both EC and CC have been exposed to the same teaching materials from textbook to after-class exercise, and the only thing separates them is the teaching method, that is,

the CC was taught by the traditional teaching way and the EC was guided by cohesion theory presented by their teacher. Given the fact that their cloze test achievement is the same, the noticeable improvement of the EC preliminarily verifies the importance of cohesion theory in English cloze test teaching. Thus, cloze test teaching based on cohesion theory, to some extent, successfully influences high school students' ability to fill in blanks and is helpful for their achievements.

#### 4.2.2 Analysis of the Post-experimental Cohesion Theory and English Cloze Results

Analysis of paired sample test of EC

Table 5: Paired sample statistics of EC

Paired Sample statistics				
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair1 pre-test	22.05	53	3.681	.506
post-test	23.29	53	3.728	.512

Table 6: Correlation analysis of paired samples of EC

Paired Samples Correlations			
	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair1 pre-test & post-test	53	.499	.001

Table 7: Paired samples of EC in the pre- and post-test

Paired Samples Test								
	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair1 -	-1.245	3.888	.534	-2.317	-1.734	-2.331	52	.024

Table 5 illustrates that the mean value of EC in the pre-test is 22.05, the statistic of which increases to 23.09, which shows a significant improvement. According to table 6, which shows the correlations of results of these two tests, it is evident that the correlation coefficient is 0.499 and the Sig(2-tailed) value of the paired sample tests is 0.001, which is smaller than 0.05, that is, there lies a noticeable association within the two tests. Moreover, the data in table 7 lead us to the conclusion that there is a dramatical difference between the results of pre- and post-test of EC, since the Sig(3-tailed) value of the paired sample tests is 0.024, less than 0.05. Thus, after five months being imparted of knowledge related to cohesion theory, the EC improves learning effectiveness significantly and enjoys better performance in the cloze test, further demonstrating the proposed hypothesis — the potential positive impact of cohesion theory on the cloze test teaching in Senior High School.

Analysis of paired sample test of CC

Table 8: Paired sample statistics of CC

Paired Sample statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair1	pre-test	22.02	53	3.025	.415
	post-test	21.92	53	3.269	.449

Table 9: Correlation analysis of paired samples of CC

Paired Samples Correlations				
		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair1	pre-test & post-test	53	.539	.000

Table 10: Paired samples of CC in the pre- and post-test

Paired Samples Test								
	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair1 -	.0943	3.030	.416	-.741	-.930	.227	52	.822

It is apparent from Table 7 that the mean value of EC in the pre-test is 22.02, the statistic of which decreases to 21.92 in the post test, an unexpected reverse. As shown in Table 8, the correlation coefficient is 0.539 and the Sig(2-tailed) value of the paired sample tests is 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05, that is, there exists a noticeable correlation within the two tests. Besides, we can see from Table 10 that the Sig(2-tailed) value of paired samples is 0.822, more than 0.05, that is, there is no significant difference between the two tests results of CC. The reason why the final grades of CC is not satisfactory may be ascribed to the increasingly difficult learning materials or a conventional thinking long assuming the cloze test as a challenging task.

To sum up, through all the above data analysis, the students in the EC have improved their performance significantly after the experimental teaching. Therefore, cloze-based teaching based on cohesion theory has achieved good results, and students' capability to fill-the-blank problems has been better trained and developed. Therefore, the experimental hypothesis proposed by the author is also confirmed.

## 5. Conclusion

By analyzing the results of the first monthly exam, it is concluded that in the process of answering the cloze tests, students did not master the real problem-solving skills and they are likely to focus on eliminating the answer one by one lacking necessary interest in the connection between phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. coherent. After cross-analyzing and comparing the experimental data, it is not difficult to find that after receiving a period of study and training in the theory of cohesion, the students in the EC are more capable of dealing with the phenomenon of language cohesion in the text. Obviously, the experiment has greatly improved the students' ability to analyze vocabulary and cohesion phenomenon in a discourse. Therefore, the experimental hypothesis proposed by the author is also confirmed.

Due to the incomplete theoretical level and lack of practice of the author, this thesis still has a lot of limitations, such as the limited research objects, other factors that may influence the test results, and seemingly short time,

It is hoped that future researchers can extend the teaching experiment time and enlarge the sample of experimental subjects, so as to more objectively and comprehensively reach more data to further analyze the feasibility and impact of applying the convergence theory to high school English cloze teaching.

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