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Using Visual Support in Cloze Procedure to Teach Writing English to Elementary School Students

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to give some description of (1) why visual support is used in cloze procedure to teach writing English to elementary school students and (2) how to use visual support in cloze procedure to teach writing to elementary school students.

Based on the discussion it can be concluded that visual support is used in cloze procedure since it meets the need of supporting teaching of written form (to children) with visual information. From psychological view, the use of visual support in cloze activity gives some advantages: (a)arousing students' interest to engage in the activity, (b)preventing or at least minimizing students' frustration when they are working with cloze activity, and (c) maintaining the students; motivation to keep learning English. The application of cloze procedure with visual support in the classroom is simple and easy. It consists of material planning and the procedure for the activity. In material planning, there are three steps: selecting text, constructing the cloze text and modifying the cloze text. The procedure for the activity has the following steps : lead- in activity, directing the task, completing the text, directing the feedback.Therefore, the use of visual support in cloze procedure will be hopefully usefull in teaching English writing to elementary school students.

Introduction

Nowadays, most of elementary schools have taught English as a local content subject. It is meant to introduce English as the first foreign language and it is aimed at motivating students to have more self confidence and the are ready to learn English at higher level of school.

The process of teaching and learning English is hoped to teach students how to use English in communication. Today, it is the school based curriculum which is applied in all schools. So, the learning material is around the students' need and based on the school itself. In realtion to teaching English as a foreign language, students are expected to be able to usethe target language or English for communication in the school context.

However, the practice of teaching English for elementary school students is still dominated by traditional method. Teachers teach translation from the target language into the first language or vice versa. Besides, they present a list of words or phrases in isolation. Sentences are also presented in isolated way.

Williams (1998:4) proposes that one of the principles for teaching language to young learners is introducing language at discourse level. Teachers do not only teach words, phrases or sentences in isolation, but they need to present them in a discourse level (text). The cloze procedure , therefore, is a possible technique to teach English to elementary school students. But, students' interest should be taken into consideration. The types of the text should be interesting to students, like songs, poetry, short stories and so on. The topics are also should be in accordance to students' world such as animals, food and drink, birthday party,etc.

In addition, Abe (1994:267) suggests that one important thing to keep in mind when teaching children is that the presentation of language should not rey on the written words. In fact, many teachers are still reluctant to use pictures in the classrom. They choose the simple way in presenting words by giving a list of words and its translation.As a result, students are easily bored and they are frustratedin memorizing.

Children will be more interested in pictures with coloursand shapes. The use of visuas as pictures, cards, will be usefull materials for young learners.This idea is supported by Piaget' concept of the cognitive development of the primary school students. According to him, children in elementary schools are in concrete –operational development so that visualization of certain concepts is very important. It is broadly agreed that visuals will help learners, especially young

learners receive something longer.Therefore, the use of cloze procedure supported by visuals, is advantageous in order that the students will also be highly motivated to learn English and enjoy learning it.

This paper focuses on the discussion of why visual support is used in the cloze procedure and how visual support is used in the cloze procedures to teach English writing to elementary school students. Therefore, this paper gives some reasons of using visual support and also describes how to use visual support in cloze procedure in teaching English writing to elementary school students.

Theoretical review

1. Visual Support

a. Definition of visual support

German et al (1992:191) define visual support as materials that rely primarily upon sight. Sight is our sense that has the most powerful ability to experience anything/objects in the world. Almost all people use the sense of sight as the primary means to obtain information.

Soeparno (1987:3) has another definition. According to him, visual support is an aid that fuctions to visualize certain concepts. For example : a picture of a chair is actually a sort of visualization of the concept "chair".

To conclude, visual support is materials that rely upon sight and function to visualize certain concepts.

b. Types of visual support

There are many sorts of visual support. German et all (1992:192) divide visual support into two broad types:

1). Actual objects, that is a collection of daily objects which include both animate (living) objects such as animals, plants and inanimate (nonliving) objects such as pencils,books,bags,etc.
2). Symbolic representation, that is a representation of actual objects which include both concrete representation such as photographs and abstract representation such as drawing,charts,graphs,..etc.

c. The Use of Visual Support in Language Teaching

Psychology shows that the impression which most people have are through the sense of sight and that about 50% of the visual impression will be retained in memory. The process of understanding always through the senses, especially the sense ogf sight. Therefore, in language teaching the principle of visualization is fundamental problem.

Many styles of visuals are useful to language learners. There is no general rule to indicate which styles is appropriate at any one time. The choice is affected by some factors: learners' age, interest, type of intelligence, experience, the physical circumstances of the classroom, the cost and the convenience of the materials available (Wright,1976)

Lee and Coppen (1970) proposes four uses of visual support. They are:

a. Brightening up the classroom and bring more variety and interest into language lessons
b. Helping to provide the situation (context)which light up the meaning of utterances used,
c. Stimulating children to speak the language as well as to read and write it,
d. Helping in giving one information of the one kind or another about the background of literature and about the life in the foreign country concerned.

2. Cloze Procedure

a. Definition of Cloze Procedure

Bastidas (1984:20) defines cloze procedure as a process of systematically deleting words from a passage and replacing them with the blanks to be filled by the student. He refers to the term cloze, which is gestalt psychology applies to human tendency to complete a familiar but not quite finished pattern.

Olson and Dillner (1982:417) define cloze procedure as a tecnique which involves the use of the teacher-selected reading passage of one more paragraphs in which words have been deleted at regular intervals and replace with the blanks of uniform size. Students are asked to complete the activity by filling in the blanks with appropriate words.

So, cloze procedure is a technique, which involves the process of deleting words from reading passage and replacing them with blanks that should be filled by students with the appropriate words.

b. The Cloze Procedure : Writing Applications

Jeannete Haris, states that the cioze procedure can be used both in reading and writing.There are some benefits of using cloze procedure in teahing writing. Those are:

1) the cloze procedur raises to the writers' level of consciousness the prediction nature of readingand writing. As readers, students must anticipate meaning in order to comprehend and as writers hey must help their readers to predict meaning.
2) the cloze procedure reinforces for the writers the important of context. Writers need to understand the semanticand syntactic relationship that exist at the level of thye sentence and the paragraph in order to make the linguistic choices that are based on those relationship.
3) the cloze procedure helps students learn more about how the language works-the interaction of vocabulary and syntax, the subtle influence of diction on style, the important grammatical relationships between words in a sentence, and equally important logical relationships between sentences in a paragraph.

3. Teaching English to elementary school students

a. The general Understanding on Language Learning of Children

Hudelson (1994: 256) proposes four principles of how children learn in general and in learning a language. The principles are as follows:

1) Children in elementaryschools learn through hands-on experiences and through manipulating of objects in the environment. They learn by doing. It means that they need to be active and to be engaged in activities of which language is needed.
2) Children in elementary schools learn in social context, ingroups where some group members know more than others.
3) Children language acquisition occurs through children figuring out how the lannguage works, through making and testing out hypothesis about the language.
4) Children language acquisition occurs through social interaction, through having to use the language with others in authentic communication setting.

b. Principles of teaching English to Children

Children and adults are very different in development terms. The important thing that needs to be considered by the English teacher is the difference in how they learn languages. This point determines how they should be taught, both in terms of technique and attitude. Abe (1983) states that to take the same approach to the taeching of dissimilar learning groups is a huge mistake.In short, the teaching of children and adult or teenagers should be distinguished.

Supriani(1996) summarizes four principles of teaching English to children:

1) Children should be relaxed while learning English
2) Teacher may put new structural items in situations to make them understand and ask children to repeat.
3) To improve listening and speaking skills, the messagesshould be given and perceived in chunks.
4) To introduce new words, games can be played and pictures can be manipulated

Discussion

1. Rationale of using visual support in cloze procedure

The cloze procedure as a teaching technique has been used since 1970 (Bastidas, 1984:21). The technique offers the learning process through trial and error. When the students' trial is successful, their confidence in learning becomes stronger and when they they make errors, they are provided with good opportunity to learn it.

The basic considerations underlying this implementation are:

a. One of the principles of teaching English to young learners is that the introduction of the language should be in the level of discourse (William,1998). The cloze procedure does this.

Bastidas (1984) states that the technique deals not with isolated language structure but always with structures in meaningful context.

b. One of the basic principles of how children learn language is trial and error. Children learn through making and testing out hypothesis about the language (Hudelson,1994). Cloze procedure offers the same sort of learning process. In completing the cloze task students try to make correct guesses and sometimes they cannot do it. Their gusses are incorrect.

To have two considerations above is not enough. As in the program the learners are still young, further considerations need to be taken:

a. Children grow up expecting their world to be visual. They are accustomed to receiving constant visual support where communication is concerned. It is no coincidence that most popular stories for young children are beautifully illustrated. Indeed, part of the process of learning to write involves using visual clues to support the written form.It follows that illustration and the use of visual supports are extremely important in the teaching of English to young learners (Vale and Feunteun,1995)

b. In teaching young learners the language should be presented only in the written form. The use of visual will be very useful and helpful.

Two statemens above imply that children may be taught the written form, in this case the cloze procedure. Children need visual information very much. Therefore, the use of cloze procedure to teach children should be supported with visuals.

2. The Application of visual support in cloze procedure in the classroom

a. Material planning

1) Selecting material: Choose materials that might be interesting for students, such as stories, songs, poems, etc.
2) Constructing the cloze text : Some words are deleted and make some blanks.
3) Modifying the cloze text: Add the visual support which is considered attractive.

b. The procedure for the activity

The procedures are divided into:

1) Lead-in activity: Teacher leads students into the topic.
2) Directing task: The teacher gives explanation on how to do the task.
3) Read for the task: Students complete the text based on the given visual support.
4) Directing feedback: the teacher conducts a discussion, on which answers are possible,
5) Directing the text-related task (follow up): Students do something with the text.

Conclusion

To conclude the use of visual support in cloze procedure at least gives some advantages:

1. Arousing the students' interest to engage in the activity. Generally, children like pictures, the materials supported with the pictures is more interesting to them.
2. Preventing students' frustration when they are completing the cloze task. Without any visual they may feel it hard to do the tasks and be frustrated.
3. Maintaining students' motivation to learn English. Getting a feeling of success, instead of being frustrated is a good starting point in learning. They may enjoy learning and keep learning English well.

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