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ADULT LEARNERS

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ERROR PATTERNS IN CLOZE MEASURES
OF READING ACHIEVEMENT
OF ADULT LEARNERS

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An Abstract of the Thesis Presented in Partial
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The purpose of the study was to examine, through the analysis of responses on a cloze passage, the error patterns which emerge from a comparison of adults at various reading achievement levels. Additionally, the cloze error patterns of male and female adult readers were compared.

Subjects for the study were 174 adult students from ten adult education programs in Maine. Subjects were divided into three reading groups--low, middle, and high--on the basis of their scores on the Tests of Adult Basic Education.

The cloze instrument was constructed by deleting every fifth word from a passage determined to be at the eighth grade reading level by the Dale-Chall Readability Formula. A system for classifying cloze responses was

defined. Each cloze response was placed in one of the following five mutually exclusive categories: (1) exact replacement (ER), (2) syntactically and semantically acceptable (SSA), (3) syntactically acceptable only (Syn A), (4) syntactically and semantically unacceptable (SSU), and (5) no response (NR).

Analyses of variance were calculated to determine whether there were statistically significant differences among readers of varying reading achievement levels and by sex with respect to response type. Using Duncan's Multiple Range Tests, an analysis was performed to identify significant differences between cell means for variables exhibiting a significant F-ratio. Pearson product-moment correlations were computed for nine variables.

The following significant differences were revealed:

1. High level readers made more ER's, more SSA's, fewer SSU's, and fewer NR's than low level readers.
2. Middle level readers made fewer ER's than high level readers and more ER's and fewer NR's than low level readers.
3. Females made more SSA's than males.

It was concluded that:

1. Low, middle, and high level adult readers

differ in their usage of syntactic and semantic cues. In particular, very distinctive differences exist between high and low level adult readers.

2. Types of cloze responses made serve to verify the discriminating ability of the TABE.

3. Although a difference was found between male and female adult readers in their use of syntactic and semantic cues, the data available does not provide a clear explanation of this result.

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Identification of factors which contribute to improving an adult's reading achievement level is an important concern in reading research. Knowledge of these factors should lead to more efficient and successful means of developing the reading comprehension of adults. Information about these factors could be provided by a source that detects differences in the reading skills possessed by adults at various reading levels. Cloze test responses analyzed on the basis of error type could be such a source.

Studies analyzing cloze errors of readers of different ability levels have been conducted with child and adolescent subjects. However, very little research of this type has been carried out with adult subjects. Wescott and Knafle (1979) conducted one such study with adults in which patterns based on the relationships among logical, grammatical, illogical, and no response errors at the independent, instructional, and frustration reading levels have emerged. Further studies with adult subjects are needed in which an analysis of cloze test responses is

performed to determine whether different error patterns emerge at different reading levels when additional factors are taken into consideration.

First of all, if an error pattern system is to be established that provides enough information upon which to base the construction of a significantly better diagnostic model of assessing and teaching reading comprehension, it is not enough to know, as in the Wescott and Knafle study, that a reader has made more illogical errors than another reader. Rather, it is necessary to determine in what ways respective errors are illogical in order to try to learn what language skills and/or cues the reader may or may not have used in committing these errors.

Secondly, it would seem to be more beneficial to establish error patterns on the basis of a between groups analysis rather than on a within groups analysis such as was done in the Wescott and Knafle study. Through the within groups analysis the Wescott and Knafle study found the error pattern for American adults at both the independent and instructional levels to be the same. At each of these levels the American adults made significantly more logical errors than illogical, no response, or grammatical errors. This outward appearance of similarity, however, seems superficial because the study has not considered the key issue of whether the independent level