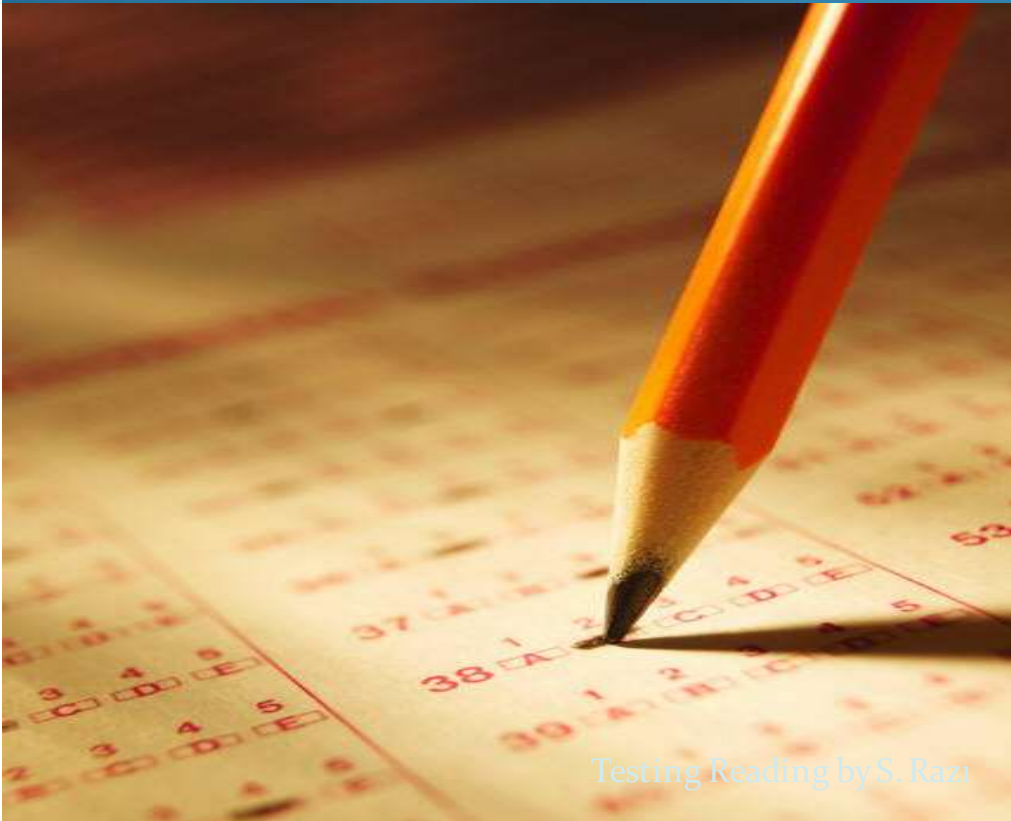


Assessing Reading



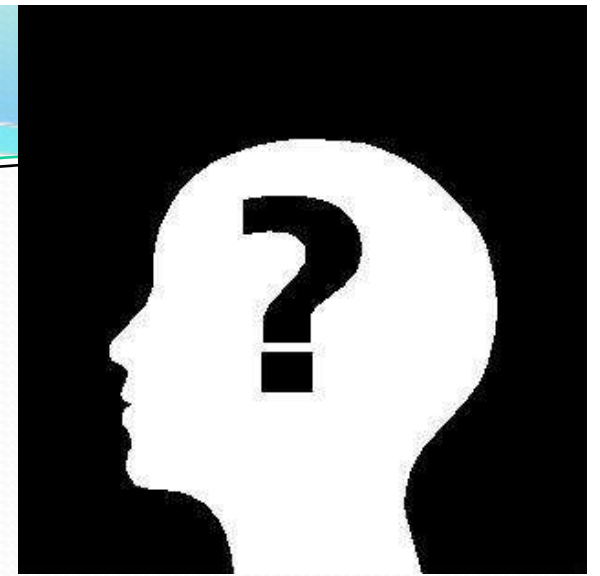
Testing Reading by S. Razi

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Pre-Questions

- Can you name or describe the techniques that you are familiar in testing reading?
- What might be the reasons of testers in preparing such type of questions?
- How can you understand how difficult to understand a text is for readers?



Content

- Testing language
- Testing reading
- Comprehension questions
- Techniques for testing reading
- Weighted Marking Protocol
- Readability analysis
- Assignment 2
- Conclusion



Introduction:

Language testing



Testing takes place at every stage of our lives, as well as in the language learning process.

Reasons for testing

- For an individual's social and working life
- In education to assess learners
- For research purposes

Categories of language tests

Placement

Diagnostic

Progress (Achievement)

Proficiency

Testing reading

- Teachers feel uncomfortable in testing reading.
- There are similarities between the designs of classroom activities and test items.

Methods:

- **discrete-point techniques:**
to test a particular subject at a time
- **integrative techniques:**
to see the overall picture of a reader

Categories of comprehension questions

- **Textually explicit questions:**
question information and correct answer are given
- **Textually implicit questions:**
combine information across sentences to find the answer
- **Script-base (scriptually implicit) questions:**
refer to the background knowledge

Techniques for testing reading

- The Cloze Test
- Gap Filling
- C-Test
- The Cloze Elide Test
- Multiple Choice Questions
- Summary Test
- The Gapped Summary
- Dichotomous Items
- Editing Tests
- Question and Answer Tests
- Short-Answer Tests
- Matching Tasks
- Ordering Tasks

The cloze test

- Deleting every *n*-th word (usually between **5 and 12**) and simply requiring to restore them.
- The tester cannot control which words to delete.
- Do not assess **global** reading ability but assess **local-level** reading.
- To achieve reliable results, *at least 50 deletions*.

Sample cloze test (every 6th word deleted). No deletions in the 1st two sentences.

It was almost midnight. John was still awake because he did not have to get up early in the morning. 1) His favourite actor's movie on TV 2) had just finished. The bell rang. 3) He opened the door. It was 4) his flat-mate, Tom. He had forgotten 5) his keys at home in the 6) morning He seemed too tired to 7) chat with John so he went 8) to bed as soon as possible. 9) He felt lonely and decided to 10) go to bed. He went to the 11) bathroom and brushed his teeth. When 12) John came into his bedroom, he 13) noticed some candies on the table. 14) He ate a few of them. 15) The candies reminded him of his 16) childhood. Since he did not want 17) to sleep, he decided to look 18) at some old photos. He felt 19) sad when he saw his ex-girlfriend 20) Laura in a photo. He remembered 21) the days they had spent together. 22) He checked his watch and went 23) to bed.

Gap-filling test

- Deletion of words on a rational basis, not based on any system.
- The tester can control the test.
- Does not require extracting information by skimming.
- Since the tester knows which words have been deleted in a gap-filling test, these words can be considered to be essential to meaning.

Sample gap filling test: 10 content words deleted

It was almost midnight. John was still awake because he did not have to get up 1) early in the morning. His favourite actor's 2) movie on TV had just finished. The 3) bell rang. He opened the door. It was his flat-mate, Tom. He had forgotten his 4) keys at home in the morning. He seemed too tired to chat with John so he went to 5) bed as soon as possible. John felt lonely and decided to go to bed. He went to the 6) bathroom and brushed his 7) teeth. When he came into his bedroom, he noticed some candies on the table. He ate a few of them. The candies reminded him of his childhood. Since he did not want to 8) sleep, he decided to look at some old 9) photos. He felt sad when he saw his ex-girlfriend Laura in a photo. He remembered the days they had spent 10) together. He checked his watch and went to bed.

Another sample gap filling test

Fill in the correct word(s) from the list below. There is one extra word which you do not need to use.

PhD / graduates / Master's / Postgraduate / supervision / colleges / secondary schools / universities / kindergarten / state schools / doctorate / private / nursery / undergraduate

Although going to a _____ or _____ school is up to the parents, full-time education is compulsory in Great Britain for all children between 5 and 16 years. Most pupils receive free education at _____; and approximately 7% attend _____, fee-paying schools, or are educated at home. Three-quarters of young people in the United Kingdom choose to stay in full-time education after 16, either continuing in school or by attending further education _____. After further study at school or further education colleges, about a third of all young people enter _____ or other institutions of higher education for taking _____ courses. _____ studies may take the form of an independent piece of research under _____ or a taught course, and leads to a variety of degrees and awards. The taught courses normally last for one or sometimes two years for a _____ degree. Completion of a _____ normally takes a minimum of three years where candidates are provided with Dr initials for their _____ thesis. Many post-experience courses are also available, either leading to a qualification or providing a refresher course for _____ wishing to update or extend their knowledge.

C-test

- An alternative integrated approach.
- Based upon the same theory of closure or reduced redundancy as the cloze test.
- Restoring the second half of every second word.
- More reliable and valid but more irritating than cloze tests.

Sample C-test:

second half of every second word deleted

It was almost midnight. John was still awake because he did not have to get upping early in the morning. His favourite actor's movie on Tv had just finished. The bell ranging. He opened the door. It was his flat-mate, Tom. He had forgotten his keys at home in the morning. He seemed too tired to chat withing John so he went to bed as soon as possible. John felt lonely and decided to go to bed. He went to the bathroom and brushed his teeth. When he came intoing his bedroom, he noticed some candies on the table. He ate a few of them. The candies reminded him of his childhood. Since he did not want to sleep, he decided to look at some of photos. He felt sad when he saw his ex-girlfriend Laura in a photo. He remembered the days they had spent together. He checked his watch and went to bed.

The cloze elide test

- Also called: '*intrusive word technique*', '*text retrieval*', '*text interruption*', '*doctored text*', '*mutilated text*' and '*negative cloze*'.
- The tester inserts words.
- The test-taker finds the words that do not belong to the text.
- Seen as puzzles rather than language tests.
- Used, not for comprehension, but for a measure of comprehension.
- The number of correctly identified items is taken as a measure of reading speed.

Sample close elide test: 5 words inserted

It was almost midnight. John was still awake because ~~so~~ he did not have to get up early in the morning. His favourite actor's movie on TV had just finished. The bell rang. He opened the door. It was his flat-mate ~~friend~~, Tom. He had forgotten his keys at home in the morning. He seemed ~~too~~ very tired to chat with John so he went to bed as soon as possible. John felt lonely and decided to go to bed. He went to the bathroom and brushed his ~~teeth~~. When after he came into his bedroom, he noticed some candies on the table. He ate a few of them. The candies reminded him of his childhood. Since he did not want to sleep, he decided to look at some old photos. He felt sad when he saw his ex-girlfriend Laura in a ~~photo~~ picture. He remembered the days they had spent together. He checked his watch and went to bed.

Multiple-choice question

- Consists of a stem and a number of options (usually four), from which the testee has to select the right one.
- Distractors may trick deliberately, which results in a false measure.
- Requires a separate ability.
- Test-takers do not necessarily link the stem and the answer in the same way that the tester assumes so they may reach the correct answer by following false reasoning.
- Test-takers are provided with possibilities that they might not otherwise have thought of.
- Time-consuming to prepare, but easy to evaluate, also a machine-markable technique.
- Fashionable since marking them is totally objective.

Sample MC question

(After a text on the life of Edison)

Edison created something new about..... question

a) once a month.

..... distractor

b) twice a month.

..... the correct answer

c) twice a week.

..... distractor

d) once a week.

..... distractor

Summary tests

- In *the free-recall test (immediate-recall test)*, the test-takers are given a text, asked to read it, then leave it and write down everything they can remember.
- In *the summary test* which is accepted as a more familiar variant, the test-takers are expected to summarise the main ideas of the text they read beforehand.
- Both of them are usually scored according to Meyer's *recall scoring protocol*, where the text is divided into idea units and the relationship between these idea units is examined.
- *The problem:* whether the writing skill or the reading skill is being tested.
- *The solution:* ask the test-takers to write the summary in L1 or present a number of summaries and ask them to select the best summary.

Sample summary test

- 1 Read the passage again and write notes in the chart on the following features of the programs offered by the Department of Foreign Languages Education. Remember that not all the boxes can be filled in.

	<i>English Language Teaching Department</i>	<i>German Language Teaching Department</i>	<i>Japanese Language Teaching Department</i>
<i>Number of BA students</i>			
<i>Number of MA student</i>			
<i>Something unique with the department</i>			
<i>Job opportunities</i>			
<i>International relations</i>			
<i>Courses offered for BA</i>			
<i>Relations with the other departments</i>			

- 2 Choose the best summary of paragraph four.
- The writer emphasises that it will not be enough for postgraduate students to be successful only in theory but not in application.
 - In the writer's opinion, graduates of MA need to be dealing with both teaching and research.
- 3 Now choose the best summary of lines 108-15.
- The writer mentions that their aim is training Japanese Language teachers for Europe, Middle East and Africa.
 - The writer mentions that their institution is the only one in Europe, Middle East and Africa which is training Japanese Language teachers for secondary schools.
- 4 Using your notes and your answers to the questions above, write a summary of the passage in 120-150 words.

The gapped summary

- Introduced to overcome the problems of Summary Tests.
- Test-takers read a text for a limited time period, and then read a summary of the same text that includes some missing key words without referring to the text. Students must restore the missing words from the original text.
- Does not test the writing ability.
- Scoring can be done by following the same process as in cloze or gap-filling tests.

Sample gapped summary test

Complete the text below, which is a summary of the text. Use **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage to fill each blank space.

1990s – Faculty of Education was _____ 1 _____ at Anafartalar Campus.

2000s – The University _____ 2 _____ and this resulted in the opening of new faculties and colleges.

21st century – The University aims to be a modern Republic University not only on _____ 3 _____; but also on national and _____ 4 _____ basis.

Recently– The changes and development in many areas help the University to achieve its goals related with _____ 5 _____ _____ 6 _____.

Dichotomous items

(True-false technique)

- Whether the given statement is true or false
- The ease of construction makes this technique popular.
- Easy to design and score.
- Also machine-markable.

Problem: a 50% possibility of guessing the right answer without comprehending the target text.

Solution 1: add one more statement such as 'not given' and reduce this chance to 33.3%. However, such statements actually tend to test the ability of inferring meaning rather than comprehension.

Solution 2: ask them firstly to state whether the statements are true or false, and secondly to correct the false ones.

Sample dichotomous items

(After reading an article about Çanakkale.)

Are the sentences 'Right' (A) or 'Wrong' (B)? If there is not enough information to answer 'Right' or 'Wrong', choose 'Doesn't say' (C).

- *The air is polluted in the Gulf of Edremit.*

A Right

B Wrong

C Doesn't say

- *The shores are always very crowded in Çanakkale.*

A Right

B Wrong

C Doesn't say

Editing tests

- Identify the errors and correct them.
- Similar to proof-reading tasks in real life.
- The nature of the error identifies whether it is testing the reading skill or linguistic ability.
- Delete a word from the text without replacing it with a gap and ask test-takers to find out and write the missing word in the place it belongs.
- Criticised since they provide wrong information.
- The tests takers may be given points for each error that they identify.

Sample editing tests

Editing tests consist of passages in which errors have been introduced, which the candidate has to identify. These errors can be in multiple-choice format, or can be more open, for example by asking candidates to identify one error per line of text and to write the correction opposite the line. The nature of the error will determine to a large extent whether the item is testing the ability to read, or a more restricted linguistic ability.

- 1) errors
- 2) introduced
- 3) be
- 4) identify
- 5) -----
- 6) large
- 7) a

Editing tests consist of passages in which errors have been introduced, which the candidate has to identify. These errors can be in multiple-choice format, or can be more open, by asking candidates to identify one error per line of text and to write the correction opposite the line. The nature of the error will determine to a large extent whether the item is testing the ability to read, or a more restricted linguistic ability.

- 1) in
- 2) to
- 3) for example
- 4) of

Question and answer tests

- Check the comprehension
- In *open-ended questions*, test-takers are asked to write down every detail related with the question.
- The marking process in *closed questions* is easier since there are fewer possible correct answers.
- Decide whether to take into account or ignore grammatical mistakes.

Sample question and answer

Open-ended question

- Where did Frances & Michael meet for the first time? Describe Michael's feelings at that time.

Closed question

- What does Michael do when something bad happens?

Short-answer tests

- Draw conclusions & answer, not just responding 'yes' / 'no'.
- Extremely useful for testing comprehension.
- Tests the ability to identify referents.
- A semi-objective alternative to MCQs.
- One needs to understand the text to write the right answer.
- Difficult to construct since the tester needs to see all possible answers.
- The best short-answer questions are those with a unique correct response.
- Scoring the responses depends on thorough preparation of the answer-key.

Sample short answer test

It was almost midnight. John was still awake because he did not have to get up early in the morning. His favourite actor's movie on TV had just finished. The bell rang. He opened the door. It was his flat-mate, Tom. He had forgotten his keys at home in the morning. He seemed too tired to chat with John so he went to bed as soon as possible. John felt lonely and decided to go to bed. He went to the bathroom and brushed his teeth. When he came into his bedroom, he noticed some candies on the table. He ate a few of them. The candies reminded him of his childhood. Since he did not want to sleep, he decided to look at some old photos. He felt sad when he saw his ex-girlfriend Laura in a photo. He remembered the days they had spent together. He checked his watch and went to bed.

Question: What is the relationship between John and Tom?

Expected answer: Flat-mates.

Matching

- Two sets of stimuli to be matched against each other.
- Multiple-matching items are similar to MCQs since there are distractors.
- Each item acts as a distractor except one.
- Since there is only one final choice, giving more alternatives than the matching task requires is more sensible.
- They are difficult to construct because of the need to prevent unintentional choices.
- Criticised since they offer distractors that the test-takers would not otherwise consider.
- Easy to score as the test-takers gain points for each correct matching.

Sample matching task

You are going to read a magazine article about computerised patients. Choose from the list (A-H) the sentence which best summarises each part (1-6) of the article. There is one extra sentence which you do not need to use. There is an example at the beginning (o).

- A** It is now possible to show patients what will happen to them during surgery.
- B** The amount of information meant that it was impossible to send quickly.
- C** Very realistic images will help prevent errors during surgery.
- D** A donated body made it all possible.
- E** Doctors are now looking for more bodies to put on computer.
- F** The ease with which the disk can be used means it is very popular.
- G** The tiniest details were put on camera for the computer image.
- H** Movement of the body image will aid surgery.

Sample matching task

After a text about a ride

Read the text and match the places 1-6 on the map with the sentences about the ride.

- a The author and Cem met for the first time.
- b They had their first break..
- c They spent the night.
- t They had tea.
- e They had sandwiches.
- f They had their last break.



Ordering tasks

- Putting the scrambled words, sentences, paragraphs or texts into correct order.
- They test the ability to
 - detect cohesion,
 - overall text organisation or
 - complex grammar.

Problems in ordering tasks

Problem 1: There may appear another sensible order different from the tester's.

Solution: Accept all sensible orders or rewrite the text in order to provide only one possible order.

Problem 2: How to mark to those who answer half of the text in the correct order.

Solution 1: Mark them wholly correct or wholly right but when they are marked in terms of partial credit, then the marking process becomes unrealistically complex and error-prone.

Solution 2: Mark them according to *Weighted Marking Protocol*.

Sample ordering task: the text

It was almost midnight. John was still awake because he did not have to get up early in the morning. His favourite actor's movie on TV had just finished. The bell rang. He opened the door. It was his flat-mate, Tom. He had forgotten his keys at home in the morning. He seemed too tired to chat with John so he went to bed as soon as possible. John felt lonely and decided to go to bed. He went to the bathroom and brushed his teeth. When he came into his bedroom, he noticed some candies on the table. He ate a few of them. The candies reminded him of his childhood. Since he did not want to sleep, he decided to look at some old photos. He felt sad when he saw his ex-girlfriend Laura in a photo. He remembered the days they had spent together. He checked his watch and went to bed.

The ordering task

Put the scrambled sentences into the correct order that they happen.

(.....) John ate some candies.

(.....) John felt sad.

(.....) Tom went to bed and John felt lonely.

(.....) John watched his favourite actor's movie on TV.

(.....) John remembered his childhood.

(.....) The bell rang and Tom came home.

(.....) John looked at photos.

(.....) John brushed his teeth.

Correct order of the task

(5) John ate some candies.

(8) John felt sad.

(3) Tom went to bed and
John felt lonely.

(1) John watched his
favourite actor's movie on
TV.

(6) John remembered his
childhood.

(2) The bell rang and Tom
came home.

(7) John looked at photos.

(4) John brushed his teeth.

(1) John watched his
favourite actor's movie on
TV.

(2) The bell rang and Tom
came home.

(3) Tom went to bed and
John felt lonely.

(4) John brushed his teeth.

(5) John ate some candies.

(6) John remembered his
childhood.

(7) John looked at photos.

(8) John felt sad.

A fictitious student's answer

- (4) John ate some candies.
- (7) John felt sad.
- (2) Tom went to bed and John felt lonely.
- (8) John watched his favourite actor's movie on TV.
- (5) John remembered his childhood.
- (1) The bell rang and Tom came home.
- (6) John looked at photos.
- (3) John brushed his teeth.

- (8) John watched his favourite actor's movie on TV.
- (1) The bell rang and Tom came home.
- (2) Tom went to bed and John felt lonely.
- (3) John brushed his teeth.
- (4) John ate some candies.
- (5) John remembered his childhood.
- (6) John looked at photos.
- (7) John felt sad.

MOVED ABOVE

The formula of

Weighted Marking Protocol

(Razi, 2005)

Score 1 = number of statements 'minus' number of corrections

Score 2 = Score 1 'minus' number of probable minimum score

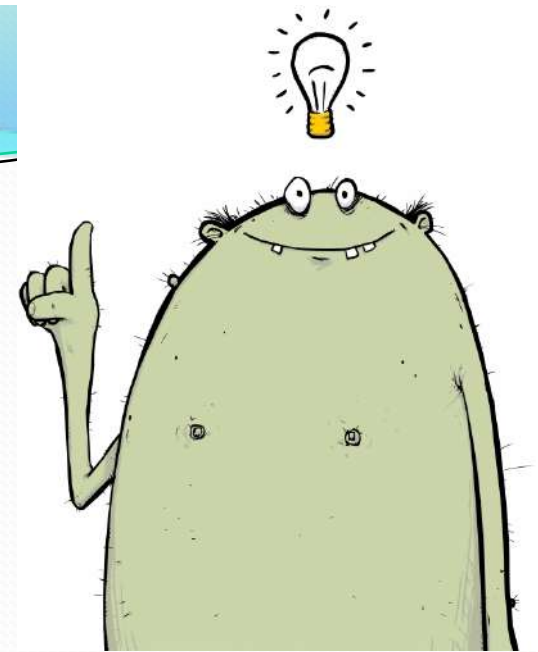
Score 3 = total amount of ordering task 'divided by' Score 2

SCORE = Score 2 'multiplied by' Score 3

According to Weighted Marking Protocol, previously mentioned fictitious student gets 16 points.

Conclusion

- **No best method**
- Consider the advantages and the disadvantages of the techniques and decide which one is the most appropriate technique for your test.



The End