

A fresh look at the evaluation of narration order tasks in reading comprehension

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Abstract

This paper aims to briefly discuss techniques such as ‘the cloze test’, ‘gap-filling’ and others employed in assessing reading. The main goal of the paper resides in the marking of ‘ordering tasks’ where students are asked to re-arrange the order of sentences given in incorrect order. Since the evaluation process of such tasks is thought to require complex abilities, Reading Teachers tend to use them in their tests. According to Alderson, Reading Teachers frequently tend to mark these tasks either wholly right or totally wrong since the partial marking process is quite complex. In this respect, the readers of this paper will be introduced to a new approach developed by the author (himself) for the evaluation of ordering tasks in order to achieve a fairer evaluation. This new approach makes it possible for Reading Teachers to reward their students for right answers in ordering tasks and not to punish them just for a single mistake.

A NEW LOOK FOR THE EVALUATION OF NARRATION ORDER TASKS ON READING COMPREHENSION

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Outline of the presentation

- Language testing
- Testing reading
- Techniques for testing reading
- A new approach for marking ordering tasks

LANGUAGE TESTING

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

Reasons for testing (McNamara 2000):

- Their effects on an individual's social & working life
- In education to assess learners
- For research purposes

Categories of language tests (Alderson 1996, Harmer 2001):

Placement	Diagnostic
Progress (Achievement)	Proficiency

Testing reading: Reading teachers feel uncomfortable in testing reading (Alderson 1996).

There are similarities between the designs of classroom activities and test items.

Categories (Pearson and Johnson 1978):

Textually explicit questions: Question information and correct answer are given

Textually implicit questions: Combine information across sentences to find the answer

Script-base (scriptally implicit) questions: refer to the background knowledge

Techniques for testing reading:

No best method (Alderson 2000)

The cloze test

Dates back to the 19th century.

"...typically constructed by deleting from selected texts every n-th word ... and simply requiring the test-taker to restore the word that has been deleted" (Alderson 2000: 207).

N= 5-11 (Weir 1990, Cohen 2001), N= 5-7 (McNamara 2000)

N= 5 (Alderson 1979)

They do not assess global reading ability but they do assess local-level reading.

Gap-filling test

Deletion of words on a rational basis.

Do not require extracting information by skimming

C-test

Restoring the second half of every second word

The cloze elide test (Intrusive Word Technique)

Finding out the words that do not belong to the text inserted by the tester

Multiple-choice question

Consists "...of a stem and a number of options (usually four), from which the testee has to select the right one" (Ur 1996: 38).

Summary tests

Summary of the main ideas of the text

Free-recall test (Immediate-recall test)

Read, drop, write down everything you remember

Problem: testing writing instead of reading (Alderson 2000)

Dichotomous items (True-False Technique)

Whether the given statement is true or false

Test the ability of inferring meaning rather than comprehension

Editing tests

Identify the errors and correct them.

Short-answer tests

Draw conclusions and answer

Matching

Two sets of stimuli to be matched against each other

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 (Alderson 2000).

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

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.

Mark them wholly correct or wholly right.

If they are marked in terms of partial credit, then the marking process becomes unrealistically complex and error-prone (Alderson 2000).

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 has 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 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.

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

(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.

Student 1

(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.

Student 1

(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.

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

Student 2:

(3) John ate some candies.

(2) John felt sad.

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

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

(6) John remembered his childhood.

(7) The bell rang and Tom came home.

(1) John looked at photos.

(4) John brushed his teeth.

Student 2:

(1) John looked at photos.

(2) John felt sad.

(3) John ate some candies.

(4) John brushed his teeth.

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

(6) John remembered his childhood.

(7) The bell rang and Tom came home.

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

Score 1 = number of statements – number of corrections

Score 2 = Score 1 – number of probable minimum score

Score 3 = total amount of ordering task / Score 2

SCORE = Score 2 x Score 3

Rank of ordering questions	
No of corrections	Ordering task score
0	20
1	16
2	12
3	8
4	4
5	0
6	0
7	0

Conclusion

Enables to make a partial evaluation.

In traditional approach, test-takers who answer half the ordering task in the correct order are equal to those who have no mistakes, or those who have no sensible order.

The major benefit of this new approach is that it enables professionals in this field to reward their students according to their right answers in ordering tasks, not to punish them just for a single mistake.

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