INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

English is an internationally accepted medium of communication. It is functioning as India's most effective link with the expanding universe. A good amount of knowledge in science and technology, trade and commerce, social sciences and humanities is found in the English language. "A survey of the use of English in the world to-day reports that it is used by 403 million people as their first language, and by 1.5 billion people as their second language. In six countries it has the status of official language. Twelve countries have adopted English as their effective second language." ¹

English is an associative official link language in India. It helps the nation to keep up with the technological progress of the world. It is perceived as an instrument of intellectual communication and a means to promote upward social mobility. Parents and students consider English as a national asset of supreme importance as the medium of instruction for higher academic learning.

"To a question from some surveyors, nearly all respondents said that they would like their child to learn only English,

if it had to learn only one language". The five Indian Institutes of Technology, the four Indian Institutes of Management and a few other institutions like Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Post-graduate Medical Education and Research, Pondicherry, insist upon a minimum proficiency in English from the aspirants who wish to pursue higher academic studies there. The growing number of coaching classes for examinations like Test of English as a Foreign Language, Graduate Record Examination, Common Admission Test and Spoken English courses bear testimony to the importance of English in India.

In India, education comes under concurrent list. The Central Government, by way of appointing education commissions, offers suggestions. However, the educational pattern in respect of teaching languages varies from State to State. In Tamil Nadu, Tamil is taught as the first language and English as the second language. Commenting on the place of English in education, the Kothari Commission has declared, "As English will, for a long time to come, continue to be regarded as a library language in the field of higher education, a strong foundation will have to be laid in the school stage."  

2 Shresh Chaudhary, "How to Shape our Language Policy", The Hindu, 3rd July, 1990, P.I.

In the institutions of higher education and universities of Tamil Nadu, English continues to be the medium of instruction. Both parents and students are also aware of the fact that prosperity of the nation depends upon one's capacity to absorb science and technology, particularly in the areas of medicine, agriculture and industry, and that such an absorption is possible only through English. Even though the State Government emphasises the need for switching over to the mother tongue as medium of instruction at the college level, the learners, by and large, continue to prefer English. Even the most economically backward student prefers English medium to Tamil medium in Arts courses in spite of stipends and promises of jobs. In the professional courses, English continues to be the medium of instruction in Tamil Nadu. Hence the functional role of this second language hardly needs to be over emphasised.

The Government of Tamil Nadu has emphasised the need for intensifying effective teaching of English even from Std.III so that learners when they join colleges would be adequately equipped with English. In the Secondary school stage, English is taught as a second language at the rate of

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six periods a week. English is taught for two more years in the Higher Secondary stage before the students enter the colleges.

Most of the learners who enter the colleges, will have studied English as a second language for not less than ten years. Those who are from Central Schools and Matriculation schools which follow the syllabus of the Central Board of Secondary Education would have studied a few subjects in the English medium, apart from learning English as a compulsory subject. Thus, in colleges, the first year degree class consists of learners from different backgrounds of education.

English language teaching is better attended to in schools of urban areas than in rural areas. "This is so because in urban areas the learners enjoy the opportunities of using the public libraries and reading materials. They are more exposed to the use of English since they come in contact with different sectors of society". Sheer neglect on the part of educational bodies of the government to provide the basic infrastructural facilities in rural areas has created a wide gap between the rural learners and urban learners.

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learners of English. Although the eligibility conditions to become an English teacher do not vary from urban schools to rural schools, very few schools in rural areas have qualified teachers of English. This is perhaps more due to the apathy of the teachers to work in rural areas than the scarcity of qualified people.

In most of the schools, intensive texts of English are not looked upon as an aid to teach reading skills, but as tools to teach the content of the texts only. In spite of the efforts of the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (Hyderabad, India) to carry on research into and to propagate the teaching of English as a skill based one, teachers, by and large, believe in teaching English for its content rather than imparting the four skills viz., Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

The development of reading is not given much importance in the English learning curriculum. In Tamil Nadu three years ago, a development was introduced by the Education Department when it prescribed a task-based text-book for Plus two studies. The text basically demands a sound knowledge of the latest trends and techniques of teaching of English. In most of the schools, the texts are explicated by the English teacher, sentence by sentence.
"Teachers resort to mother tongue for easy communication". The learners are very rarely involved in class room teaching. Though the text is learner-centred because of the domination of the teacher in the class room, learning is less and teaching is more.

Teaching of detailed texts is largely done through lectures, text explication, translation and dictation of notes. Learners hardly attempt an in-depth reading of the texts. The emphasis is on transferring information contained in the texts prescribed. "The teaching methodology adopted is reported to be examination-oriented and teacher-centred".

In colleges, there is very little activity concerning intensive reading in a class-room situation. The teacher does almost everything that the learner can do by himself. The learner is led to believe that he/she cannot be trained to read for himself or by herself. "All too often a period devoted to a text is purely one of interpretative activity on the part of the lecturer, whereas the business of

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teaching reading is to make reading an interpretative activity on the part of the student.\(^8\)

It is with this background that an investigation has been made in using cloze procedure as a teaching device for intensive reading to the students studying English under Part II in the selected colleges of Coimbatore district. It is necessary to study the existing treatment of texts prescribed for intensive reading and the tasks assigned to the learners. There is also a need to find out whether the learner makes a continuous progress in understanding the texts prescribed on the application of cloze technique. The study will throw light on the entry behaviour of the learners under study and find out whether cloze procedure helps learners to understand contextual grammar and predict meanings from the context. The study includes a discussion on the answers given by the learners in a classroom situation as a means of teaching methodology.

In Tamil Nadu, there has been no doctoral research known to the investigator about the impact of using cloze procedure systematically as a teaching device. R.Manoharan's thesis on 'A Systematic Analysis of Alternative Techniques

and Passage Characteristics Affecting Cloze Test focuses on the characteristics of cloze as a testing device. One of his important findings was that cloze procedure could be used as a teaching device. The same viewpoint was expressed by Sudarsanam also who said that his experiments on cloze as a testing device was found to be very encouraging and recommended further studies on cloze as a teaching device.

The cloze procedure was introduced by Wilson Taylor in 1953. It was derived from the word closure, which is a concept borrowed from the Gestalt School of Psychology. This school of psychology developed an attempt to explain the complex phenomenon of perceptual thinking and insight formation. A Reading specialist by profession, Wilson Taylor introduced cloze technique to assess the readability of his subjects. By systematically deleting every fifth word after leaving out one or two sentences in the beginning and at the end, the inventor of cloze evaluated the readability of his subjects. The technique was later on applied to test reading comprehension of both native


speakers and non-native speakers. The technique gained wider application for a) assessing the reading materials, b) to evaluating the appropriateness of content area texts, c) ascertaining teacher effectiveness and d) assessing its effectiveness as a teaching device.

Taylor reasoned that there was a psychological tendency to fill in the gaps to achieve a complete and comprehensive whole. For example, given the sentence, "I think I'll go for a walk in the _____", there are a number of words that immediately strike the human mind - park, yard, morning, night etc. The familiarity of the language and the context of the sentence create a tendency to perceive the situation and complete the sentence. Cloze procedure, in short, is a method whereby words are omitted from sentences and a reader/learner is asked to fill in the missing words. In a classroom situation of second language learning the learner is actively engaged in restoring words which are grammatically correct and contextually appropriate. "As a teaching device, it develops the ability to note details, to determine the main ideas, and to make inferences though seemingly at the sacrifice of rate of reading. The assumption here is that practice in supplying correct words helps the reader increase his/her power of comprehension.\[11\]

Further details about cloze have been discussed in the review of literature.

The present study focuses on using cloze procedure as a teaching device. Hence the important concepts found in the title viz., A Study on the Effectiveness of Cloze procedure in teaching intensive reading to the learners of English under Part II in the representative colleges of Coimbatore have been defined.

For the present study, the learners were divided into three groups, according to the scores they obtained in the pretest. The learners who got seventy per cent of the answers correct were treated as independent level group. Subjects who got below seventy per cent, but above fifty per cent were treated as Instructional level group, learners who got below fifty per cent were treated as frustrational level group.

'Effectiveness' in this study refers to the impact of cloze procedure on the instructional group of learners and the frustrational level group of learners. The effect is evaluated by taking into account the scores obtained by the subjects in the pre-test, the significant-non-significant differences of scores obtained by the Instructional group and frustrational group during the process of cloze
procedure and scores secured in the post-test. The pre
cloze test was designed and administered by the investigator
to all the three groups. Independent level group, instructional learners group and the frustrational level
group. The post cloze tests were also designed and
administered by the researcher. In this context, one of the
points that emerged in the English Language Teachers
Association of India (ELTAI) may be relevant. "It was
suggested that the cloze test could be chosen from the
prescribed prose text, as this would motivate them to read
the text book. At present most students prefer to buy
bazaar guides instead of the text books, and resort to rote-
memorisation of answers". 12

Effectiveness is also considered to be a change
produced by an action or cause. In the context of this
study, it implies the reading development caused in the
subjects' mind due to their systematic exposure to cloze
instruction. The procedure aims at fulfilling one of the
educational objectives viz., the end of all teaching is
learning.

Teaching

The cloze procedure as a teaching device implies imparting the need for a repetitive reading of the text by the learners to fill in the blanks with grammatically correct and contextually appropriate words.

Reading

Reading in the context of this study, refers to intensive reading of the text and the cloze text. "Intensive reading implies reading a passage in depth for complete comprehension and analysis". It involves the reader's contribution in the form of interpretation, evaluation and reflection of the meanings in a text in relation to the intended purpose set for an activity or activities. Intensive reading in the context of cloze involves the skills of understanding the meaning of words, phrases and sentences in context, understanding the various cohesive devices, predicting and guessing contextually-related words, and reading back and forth to identify the redundancies and collocations in connected discourse(s).

Text

Halliday and Hasan have used the word text to refer to "any passage spoken or written, of whatever length", that forms a unified whole. For our study text means the prescribed texts of the subjects and one cloze text based on pictures which was not a prescribed one.

The topic of the study is: 'A study on the effectiveness of cloze procedure in teaching intensive reading to the learners of English in the representative colleges in Coimbatore'. The investigator carried out a detailed study on what is cloze procedure, its various applications and the skills involved in the context of English Language teaching. He then undertook a study of relevant literature regarding reading and cloze. He then conducted a pre-test to study the entry-behaviour of the subjects in respect of reading the prescribed texts of Part II English. He conducted classes for the first year Under Graduate students and assessed the effectiveness of cloze procedure at every stage/class in terms of the number of appropriate responses and the active involvement of the subjects under study. Based on these findings, the investigator reviewed the methodology of teaching the detailed texts of English under Part II in the light of the findings of the experiments.

The study confines itself to the application of cloze procedure for teaching intensive reading. The researcher conducted combined classes for the Independent level group, instructional level group and frustrational level groups. The Independent level group who obtained seventy per cent and above refers to students who had English as medium of instruction from the 1st std. to 12th std. All the other learners form the instructional and frustrational level group. The study analyses the reading skills involved in answering the blanks provided in the cloze text. The focus of attention of the researcher was only on Instructional level group and the frustrational level group learners. As the Independent level group learners, because of their better background, could fill in the blanks with comprehension, speed and appropriateness, the researcher's attention on them was little. All the cloze texts are complete thought units and not one or two paragraphs taken from the prescribed texts. In order to provide variety, one text, in the form of pictures based on advanced organizer model (where the learners are required to go through a series of diagrams, understand them and fill in the cloze text with appropriate words) was taken up.

As cloze procedure for this study focuses on intensive reading, the researcher paid more attention to the contextual use of grammar and vocabulary rather than
narrowing down the deletion ratio. Since the procedure is used as a teaching device, the researcher has attempted to give a description of the discussion that took place in a class room situation in chapter IV of the text. The two post-tests viz., 'Holidays' and 'Neem' have not been included in the experimental procedure as they were not discussed in a classroom situation.