



## Cloze Activities

### Introduction

“Cloze” activities, in which the student fills gaps in text are a useful oral language and reading activity for assessing, practising and improving comprehension.

Cloze activities provide students with practice in

- using context clues to work out unknown words
- actively reading for meaning, rather than word by word reading
- using background knowledge to predict, understand and confirm language structures in text

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- ▶ Discussion which takes place during and following the exercise will give students opportunities to use words orally in context, discuss concepts and actively process information.
  - ▶ Emphasis is placed on words which make sense and are appropriate rather than the ‘correct’ or ‘correctly spelled’ words.

**Cloze activities can be used in a variety of ways, for various purposes.**

Teachers may use the Cloze activity for assessment purposes, and students may use it for reading and speaking practice.

*This is not a copying exercise so the book or answer sheet should not be in sight.*

**Text from the first part of each Lingomagic book is featured in this activity.**

Two versions of each text are presented:

- one, in its entirety, for use as a marking guide and/or for teachers to copy and make alterations of their choice.
- the other is based on a procedure devised by Taylor (1953) where, after the first sentence, every fifth word is deleted for students to fill in. Proper nouns (such as Kelly, Jake and Robbie) and words that are difficult to predict are excluded from this procedure, and a neighbouring word has been deleted instead.
- Introduce students to Cloze tasks using easy and/or familiar text. A practice exercise is advisable.
- Tackle the task orally as a group, especially in the early stages, or when students would benefit from hearing others explaining how they use context as an aid to comprehending. Enlarge or project the text so it is visible to the group. Mask words chosen for deletion. Uncover each word as it is predicted to give immediate feedback and to provide information for further predictions. Discuss any alternatives provided.
- Use Cloze activities before reading a book to determine suitability of text and students’ readiness, comprehension levels and strategies in operation.
- Use Cloze activities after reading a book and/or after listening to accompanying audio support, as a comprehension check.

## **Procedures for Using Cloze Activities:**

- 1) to assess students' skills of comprehension when reading levelled text and**
- 2) to determine suitability of a specific text for a particular student.**

To assess a student's level of reading comprehension on levelled text, generally, or to determine the suitability of a specific text for a particular student, use a form with deletions already in place. Choose text at a level you expect them to be able to read with above 90 Accuracy i.e. Instructional or Easy level text.

### **Read the following instructions to the student.**

*"This activity is to check how well you understand what you read. Please read the story/article and fill in the gaps with a word which best fits. It may seem that more than one word could fit but you need to choose the word which you think the author would have used. Spell the word as best you can. Check your answers when you've finished."*

- Read the introduction to them if you think they may have difficulty with it, unaided.
- Have the students use a pencil and allow the use of an eraser so that word choices may be altered after reflection.

### **Give them reasonable time to write their answers in the gaps.**

Although students should be encouraged to work for as long as they please, the teacher may want to set a time limit when it appears that the students' efforts are no longer productive. Allowing synonyms (and misspellings) or oral discussion makes the task easier.

### **To assist diagnosis of students' strengths and weaknesses in reading and speaking.**

Cloze activities are useful tools for diagnosing students' strengths and weaknesses in reading and speaking. The already prepared forms may be used by students. An analysis of the types of answers students give will guide the teacher in making decisions about future teaching points.

Group work can be beneficial where discussion enables low achieving students to hear more able students explain how they use context as an aid to comprehending.

### **4) To encourage students to use meaning and structure cues and to predict language structure, using context cues, when reading and speaking.**

For teaching to overcome a student's weaknesses the intact version of the text could be individualised to suit the needs of students. Fewer words could be deleted, clues or alternatives could be provided or particular kinds of words could be selected for deletion.

## **Individualising a Cloze Passage**

The intact version can be used as a marking guide but can also serve as a master for teachers to make their own Cloze activity, to suit the needs of specific students.

- It is recommended that teachers make a copy of the sheet and make alterations to the copy.

### **Remember to adjust the Student Instructions accordingly.**

- Deletions can be made according to the teacher's objectives, students' needs and the advice from researchers about limiting the number of nouns and about the length of any unadulterated introduction.
- Single words or groups of words may be deleted. Different scoring procedures will need to apply to nonstandardised Cloze activities.
- Different types of words can be deleted to give students specific practice in using semantics.
- Content words such as nouns, verbs and/or adjectives can be deleted.
- Practice in using structure or syntax can be provided when students are required to fill in gaps with structure words deleted.
- Deleted focus words may be supplied with clues of various types.

## Cloze with Clues

► Use already prepared sheets or make your own.

A. PICTURE CLUES for younger children.

My family is making soup for lunch.

My little brother is peeling two \_\_\_\_\_.

My big brother is \_\_\_\_\_ the carrots.

I'm putting the carrots  
in the \_\_\_\_\_.

B. SYNONYMS FOR CLUES

My family is making soup for \_\_\_\_\_.

*midday meal*

My little brother is \_\_\_\_\_ two carrots.

*removing skin*

My big \_\_\_\_\_ is cutting the carrots.

*parent's son*

C. MULTI-CHOICE CLUES

Choices are provided which could be graphically similar or associated in meaning.

*sand*

My family is making *soup* for lunch.

*shout*

*breakfast*

My little *broken* is peeling two carrots.

*brother*

*cutting*

My big brother is *coming* the carrots.

*carrots*

## D. MISSING WORDS PROVIDED

Extra words (perhaps similar in meaning or appearance) may be included as distracters.

My family is making soup for lunch.

My little brother is \_\_\_\_\_ two carrots.

My big \_\_\_\_\_ is cutting the carrots.

\_\_\_\_\_ putting the carrots

in \_\_\_\_\_ pot.

Grandpa has three leeks \_\_\_\_\_ his garden.

*brother the them peeling I'm from carrots garden*

## E. GRAPHIC CLUES

Supply letter clues to fill the gaps.

My family is making soup for lunch.

My little brother is  *p*\_\_\_\_\_ two carrots.

My big brother is  *c*\_\_\_\_\_ the carrots.

I'm  *p*\_\_\_\_\_ the carrots in the pot.

## Marking, Scoring and Analysing

*Use the intact version of the text or the corresponding book to mark the exercise.*

- Useful feedback can be gained from doing this orally, with students supplying alternatives.
- Discussion can take place about why some answers are better than others and which are unacceptable and why. If using the prepared activity and if accepting just the Exact Replacement Word as correct, a score of 40% or more indicates a good level of understanding. An analysis of the types of answers students give will guide the teacher in making decisions about future teaching points.