Cloze Procedure

Instructional Focus: Comprehension, Inferences
Grade Levels: 3-8

Why Use this Instructional Strategy
The cloze procedure is an informal diagnostic tool that teachers use to gather information about readers’ abilities to deal with the content and structure of texts they’re reading (Taylor, 1953). It assesses sentence-level comprehension (Tierney & Readence, 2005). The cloze procedure (Bluemfield & Miller, 1966) can help students learn to use context to infer word meanings. Cloze does not measure comprehension globally, only students’ ability to use the syntax (the order of words in English) and semantics (the meaning of words within sentences) within individual sentences and paragraphs.

In a cloze passage, selected words are omitted from the text (every fifth word recommended) and replaced with a blank line. Teachers construct a cloze passage by selecting an excerpt from a book (story, journal, article, etc.) that students have read. In the story, delete every fifth word and replace it with a blank line. Students read the passage and fill in the missing words. They use their knowledge of syntax and semantics to predict the missing words in the text passage. Only the exact word is considered to be the correct answer.

The cloze procedure can be done before or after reading. When used before reading, discussion can provide meaning for key terms; when completed after reading, the passage can be used for understanding of concepts. When used in pairs or small groups, the cloze procedure provides an opportunity for students to discuss their choices and justify their selection of words.

The context of the sentence, in combination with phonic and syntax clues, is very helpful in supporting the reader in identification of unknown words. The chart below shows a variety of ways one paragraph can be used to provide practice adapted to individual student needs.

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<tr>
<th>Type of Cloze</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
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| Traditional    | Leave out words selected randomly   | I went for a walk to the ____.
                             | I wanted to _____ a _____.                                              |
                             | I watched carefully but I was to be ___.                                |
| Syntactic      | Structure word that are deleted     | I went ____ a _____ to the sea.
                             | ____ wanted __ see __ dolphin.                                          |
                             | I watched carefully ____ I was ___ be disappointed.                     |
| Semantic       | Content words are deleted           | I went for a walk to the ____.
                             | I wanted to ____ a _____.                                               |
                             | I _________ carefully but I was to be __________ disappointed.          |
| Graphophonic   | Some letters are deleted            | I w____ for a w_____ to the s____.                                    |
                             | I wanted to see a d_____.                                               |
                             | I watched c_______ but I was to be d_____.                               |

Source: Adapted from Gibbons (1993)
Using the cloze procedure with English Language Learners provides an opportunity to teach English vocabulary and reading decoding skills in meaningful context (Hinkel, 2006). The cloze procedure is helpful in supporting ELLs to focus on meaning in reading. These activities help students learn ways in which the context of a reading passage – in combination with their knowledge of phonics, syntax, and prior knowledge about the topic – can support their understanding of the text they read. Including a “Word Box” for the cloze procedure can be helpful for ELL/ESL as well as struggling readers.

How to Use this Instructional Strategy
1. Select a passage of about 250 words at the appropriate reading level or from the content text (either a story or information piece of text). Retype the passage. Keep the first AND last sentence as it appears in the original text in its entirety. Beginning with the second sentence, one of the first five words is deleted and replaced with a blank. Then every fifth word in the remainder of the passage is deleted and replaced with a blank. Proper nouns are not deleted if they are the fifth word; instead, the following (or sixth word) is deleted.
2. Complete the cloze procedure. Students silently read the passage all the way through once. Students reread the passage orally and predict or “guess” the word that goes in each blank. They write the deleted words in the blanks. Have students explain how they decided which words to insert.
3. Assess students’ work. For scoring, teachers award one point each time the missing word is identified. A percentage of the correct answers is determined by dividing the number of points by the number of blanks. Compare the percentage of correct word placements with this scale:
   - 61% or more correct replacements – independent reading level
   - 41-60% correct replacements – instructional level
   - Less than 40% correct replacements – frustration level

When to Use this Instructional Strategy
The cloze procedure is one way to measure students’ comprehension and can be used in a variety of ways. It can be used to judge students’ reading level with books they haven’t read before OR can be used to assess students’ understanding of a book they have just finished reading. The cloze procedure can be used to judge whether a particular trade book or textbook is appropriate to use for classroom instruction. Giving cloze assessments periodically to document growth in the use of context cues is a way of assessing students’ abilities to make sense of text. Periodic cloze assessments can be easily included in individual student portfolios as a way to document growth in reading comprehension.

References