Instructional Cloze Procedures: Rationale, Framework, and Examples

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Cloze procedures are being used by more and more teachers. Schools, school districts, and state school systems have been using cloze or modified cloze procedures for testing reading comprehension growth. More educators now have begun to use cloze for teaching reading. One reason for this development, perhaps, is that research findings show cloze as a potentially effective instructional technique. Jongsma (1980) states that cloze "...is no more or less effective than many of the conventional instructional methods that are widely used." Even with such a modest endorsement cloze instruction has exploded in popularity.

Instructional cloze exercises are created by deleting, from sentences or longer prose, individual letters, parts of words, entire words, phrases, or portions of sentences. It is the task of the student to supply either the exact missing information or equally acceptable alternative information. When the various types of deletion patterns are used, different thinking and performance behaviors are required of the reader.

The basic attraction of cloze instruction stems from the belief that it can be used to help develop important reading behaviors. The ability to use various informational clues during the act of reading is the behavior most likely to be developed by cloze. Schoenfeld (1980) notes: "To complete a cloze passage, students must simultaneously process semantic (word meaning) and syntactic (word order) clues." Whenever graphic elements are included on the cloze blank for the student to use, phonic clues are also available for the reader. Marino (1981) adds another dimension to the value of cloze procedures by indicating that cloze tasks also involve "reader expectation." This aspect of reading may be referred to as a reader's prediction/confirmation ability. As readers move through printed materials they form predictions about what will arise past the point at which they are presently reading. This is because of information they have already processed. They then proceed to confirm their expectations by reading further. Bortnick and Lopardo (1973) state: "A major instructional advantage of the cloze procedure is that material which is prepared...draws on the language itself, and so-called skills are not taught in isolated language structures. The student is constantly exposed to the experience of handling the context of the reading material as well as the structural aspects of the language."

Some investigators indicate that the "hypothesis/test" theory provides the underlying framework for using techniques such as cloze in which context aids the reader. Dahl and Samuels (1973) state: "The hypothesis/test model of recognition of printed words presents...(a) basic idea. The reader has some prior knowledge of the subject matter and has more and more meaning accumulating as s/he progresses through the passage. As information builds the reader can predict which words have a high probability of occurring: This is the hypothesis. At this point all that is needed is confirmation of the expected word: This is the test of the hypothesis."

In brief, using the cloze technique as a teaching tool appears to rest on two assumptions:

1. The more basic resources a reader brings to a specific point during reading (e.g., knowledge of the topic, semantic associations, application of the rules of syntax, knowledge of clues contained within written material), the more able the reader will be to predict an exact missing or unfamiliar word. At the very least, the reader should be able to supply an acceptable alternative word for a missing or unfamiliar word.

2. Having students supply exact replacement—or other acceptable words—through instructional cloze activities will help students become better able to develop, understand, and utilize the basic resources they bring to the act of reading.

Jongsma (1980) indicates that there is a strong need for a conceptual framework, such as the one above, which will give focus to research and will provide guidance to those who create instructional cloze exercises. Jongsma cites three options. Context clue classification schemes, for instance, might be one way to create a conceptual framework. A second might be the framework provided by Halliday and Hasan (1976), which consists of five types of cohesive ties: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. A third approach might be to use Cambourne's (1977) processing strategies.

Of the above three options, the use of a modification of a context clue classification scheme appears to be a practical and useful way to organize instructional cloze exercises. Fortunately, much thought has been given to describing those clues which readers use to discern meaning. Artley (1943) presented one set of context clues. McCullough (1958) presented another scheme of context clues. Although there is overlap among the three, Ames' list includes those patterns which frequently aid comprehension. His list includes:

1. Experience with language and familiar expressions
2. Modifying phrases and clauses
3. Definitions or descriptions
4. Words connected in a series
5. Comparison or contrast
6. Synonym clues
7. Time, setting, and mood
8. Referents or antecedents
9. Association clues
10. Main idea and supporting details
11. Question–answer pattern
12. Prepositional clues
13. Nonrestrictive clauses or appositive phrases
14. Cause–effect patterns

With the exception of two points (1,9), Ames' list describes writing devices inserted into written material by authors which are helpful to readers in comprehending. Points 1 and 9 pertain to readers' experiential background contributions.

The identification and classification of context clues led to the development of many teaching activities in the last few decades. Unfortunately, most of these activities centered on teaching students mainly to identify context clues, rather than on helping students understand how context clues help one generate meaning and apply it to what one is presently reading. It is important to help students identify context clues. With a slight refocusing of teaching strategies, however, it is possible to help students become sensitive both to context clues and to the thinking those clues elicit (Valmont and Cera, 1979).

Comprehension exercises using the cloze technique as the major method of instruction may be created using the organizational pattern presented below. In order to create a framework for instructional cloze, this writer has identified three major areas of comprehension: (1) vocabulary, (2) relationships, and (3) personal involvement. Vocabulary is of major importance because words are the "tags" people use to identify concepts and to communicate those concepts. Relationships are important because cognition rests heavily upon knowing what something is in relation to something else. Personal involvement is seen as a third important component of comprehension, because readers automatically bring their personal understandings, attitudes, and experiences to bear on reading. This behavior may be influenced and cultivated. Subcomponents include:

Vocabulary	Relationships
general context	main idea/detail
comparisons	cause/effect
contrasts	sequences (significant order of
antonyms	events and ideas)
synonyms	inferences (implied meaning)
multiple meanings	relating information from two or
idioms	more sources
	reaching a conclusion or generalization
	analogous relationships
	classification

Personal involvement reacting to, judging, and evaluating

characters	events
opinions	facts
author's purposes	

In the above organization, the sub-components contain many of the items Ames and the others have identified as context clues. Additional items were added for the sake of practicality and completeness. In exercises based on components listed in this framework, students will be required to supply, using their existing language skills and knowledge, that information which traditionally has been considered to be the context clues. Through practice

in supplying the "context clues" themselves, students should be helped to understand the <u>effects</u> that context clues have on their own thinking while they are reading.

Sensitizing students to their own ability to supply and use context clues coupled with helping students understand the manner in which those clues influence thinking may be the most valuable aspects of instructional cloze lessons (Sampson, Valmont, Allen 1982). The following sections describe how several basic cloze teaching strategies may be created so that students themselves are required to supply part of the context. Several instructional types are supplied to demonstrate the versatility of the framework, sub-components, and instructional procedures presented in this article.

INSTRUCTIONAL CLOZE – VOCABULARY EXERCISES

<u>General context</u> — To create general context cloze exercises, simply delete words at random from a passage at the students' instructional levels. (General context exercises are probably the least effective kind of cloze exercises unless words are deleted for specific purposes. They are acceptable introductory activities.)

<u>Comparisons</u> — Create statements or short stories which include expressions requiring comparisons. Delete the comparison and have students fill in their own ideas. Example:

"At the carnival all of the rides are fun. I like the fastest ride. It is faster than _____ .

<u>Contrasts</u> — Create sentences or short stories in which the words <u>but, however,</u> and <u>on the other hand</u> are prevalent. Structure the deletion blanks so that students will have to supply the contrastive statement. Example: "Janet has a new seat on her bike. On the other hand, Fred's seat_____."

<u>Antonyms</u> — Structure sentences or short paragraphs so that students must supply a word with the opposite meaning. Examples:
"Some people like <u>hard</u> cookies, but other people like _____ ones."

"Dad's cake always stays together on the plate. Mine, however, _____."

<u>Synonyms</u> — Create a passage. Choose several words that you believe the students can replace with synonyms. Delete these words, and replace them with cloze blanks. Examples:

"The wind <u>began</u> to blow."   "The wind _____ to blow."

"I became <u>frightened</u>."   "I became _____."

<u>Multiple meanings</u> — Create sentences or a paragraph in which a single word a few times. Reveal various meanings of the word through context. (Later, provide other words and have students create their own sentences.) Example:

"The fighters are in the _____ . The telephone began to _____ . I like your diamond _____ . The bathtub has a _____ around it."

<u>Idioms</u> — Have students explain their understanding of idiomatic expressions after you have given them some context to use. Example:

> Bill was mad at Tom. Bill said, "I think I'll give Tom a piece of my mind." What Bill means is that he will

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INSTRUCTIONAL CLOZE: RELATIONSHIP EXERCISES

<u>Main idea/detail</u> — To have students deal with the main idea, create or find a brief story. Selectively delete some words and have the students fill in those blanks. Then have students supply a title (main idea) for the story. To have students fill in details, give them a short passage from which some of the important details have been deleted. Have them supply the details. (The student must be very familiar with the content of the paragraph or else it will be necessary to supply the details elsewhere on the page. When details are supplied for the students, this is a less effective activity than one in which they use only personal knowledge to fill in the blanks.)

<u>Cause-effect</u> — Create paragraphs or statements in which either the cause or the effect is stated. Delete the opposite. Examples:

> "When the big dog wagged its tail, the toys on the counter
>
> _____ .
>
> " _____ , so we could not light the fire to cook our hot-dogs while we were at the picnic."

<u>Sequences</u> — Create passages in which words such as these are deleted: <u>first</u> (of all), <u>next</u>, <u>after</u>, <u>second</u>, <u>finally</u>, <u>at last</u>. Have students fill in the blanks. (You may, also, delete statements that indicate the passage of time and have students re-supply them. Example phrases might be: "one afternoon," "the sun started to go down," "it was getting very dark," "early the next morning."

<u>Inferences</u> — Write descriptive passages. Students, through inference, fill in the name of the person, place, or thing being described. Example: "It is round and brown. Players throw it through a hoop and earn two points. It is _____ ."

<u>Relating information from two or more sources</u> — Give students two sources of information (such as an encyclopedia paragraph and a newspaper clipping.) Create a cloze passage which uses some information <u>from each source</u>. Be certain to have students <u>supply</u> some of the information. Have students read both references and then complete the cloze exercise without looking at the references.

<u>Reaching a conclusion or generalization</u> — Create a passage and selectively delete some words which students can reasonably supply. At the end of the passage, phrase the first part of a conclusive statement and have students finish it. Example: (After having students read a paragraph about African bees, present this statement)   "The African bee _____ ."

<u>Analogous relationships</u> — Give students an intact passage to read about a given person or subject. Creat a <u>parallel cloze passage</u> in which a person, or subject similar to that of the original

is presented. (Delete significant words in the cloze passage so the students must fill in parallel ideas.) Have students read the original passage and then fill in the cloze passage through their understanding of the analogy. Example:

> (The first paragraph is about an orchestra conductor; the cloze paragraph is about a police officer.) This sentence appears in the original story. "The conductor pointed the stick to tell the players when to start."
> This statement appears in the cloze exercise. "The police officer _____ to tell the drivers_____."

At the end of the exercise, a statement such as this may appear:
"A _____ directs a _____ the way a _____ directs _____."

Classification — After providing students with a list of items, create statements to help students supply the <u>category</u> into which those objects may be gouped. Examples:

> "Fred could put the paper, pens, and stamps in one place, since the are all things used to _____."

or, "Fred could put his model planes, coins, and baseball cards together, because they are all_____."

INSTRUCTIONAL CLOZE: PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT

<u>Evaluating Characters</u> — Create a paragraph describing a real or make-believe person. Be quite descriptive so readers will know the person by what he/she says or does or what others say about him/her. Next, create a cloze passage that shows the person <u>in a new setting</u>. Have students supply information about the char- acter's behavior in the new situation. Example:

> In the original passage, John is <u>at school</u>. He trips other students, takes their desserts, makes noise during movies, has to be the first one out the door, etc.
> In the cloze passage, students fill in these statements about John <u>at camp</u>:
> At mealtime, he _____. When the camp leader was talking, John _____. When everyone lined up to ride the horses, John _____
> _____.

<u>Evaluating Opinions</u> — Select from a newspaper (or create) an editorial in which arguments on both sides of an issue are pre- sented. Selectively delete some of the words or phrases which the students should be able to replace. Have students fill in the blanks and write their own opinion of the issue at the bottom of the exercise.

<u>Author's Purpose</u> — Give students a skeleton framework of a para- graph into which they must insert words to color the reader's opinion of the subject matter. Example:

> "The play was _____. The plot was so_____ _____ that by the middle of the first act, I _____ _____. The actors were _____. The part when the chorus broke into song was very _____. If you go to see this play, you will_____.

Summary
       Using the instructional cloze strategies, myriad exercises may be prepared within the basic framework of (1)vocabulary, (2)relationships and (3)personal involvement (and the sub-categories of each) as described in this article. Instruction in which students are required to supply the "context clue" as part of the cloze task may be an aspect of instructional cloze procedures that will have a great deal of value for students. Of course, a great deal of research using this framework is required before its full value may be determined.

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