

Teaching Transcription

Cloze Encounters of the Transcription Kind

by Georgia Green, CMT

A cloze activity, named for a shortening of the word “closure,” is a test of reading comprehension that requires a student to supply words which have been systematically deleted from a text. The word choices that students make provide the teacher with an opportunity to evaluate their understanding of the meaning of the text.

Studies have shown high correlations between cloze scores and tests of reading comprehension, writing ability, listening ability, and speaking proficiency, suggesting that the cloze instrument is an excellent indicator of overall language proficiency. Cloze activities are used in a variety of settings, from assessing the readability of an instruction manual to replacing the essay requirement for university admission. Cloze activities are most often associated with foreign language learning where they are used to assess language fluency. If you are thinking that a cloze activity might be able to assess the medical transcription student’s fluency in the language of medicine, you are right.

A cloze activity is particularly suited to MT training because it asks the student to supply missing words using only the clues gathered from the context of the passage. This is exactly what MT students do as they transcribe difficult dictation. Cloze activities are easy to put together, simple to grade, and interesting—sometimes even fun—for students to complete. Cloze activities should be a regular part of your lesson plans. In addition to being an ideal learning tool for a medical transcription program, cloze activities can also be developed for use in placement tests, both for education programs and for pre-employment testing.

Developing a Cloze Instrument

A traditional cloze instrument consists of a paragraph of approximately 250 words in length. The first and last sentence or two (no more than 50 words total) are left intact to provide students a framework for understanding the paragraph. Then with the remainder of the paragraph, every *n*th word is deleted ($n=5, 7$, or some other number). This is the *random* deletion method and most closely represents what an MT student encounters in dictation. An alternative to random deletion is *rational* deletion. This is where the teacher chooses which words are deleted. Rational deletion is useful for assessing or reinforcing specific grammar or vocabulary skills.

Scoring of a clozed instrument is expressed as a percentage of right answers divided by possible answers. An accept-

able score for language fluency in a random deletion cloze instrument is typically about 65% to 70%. Keep in mind that with a random deletion cloze instrument, it is not usually possible to answer every item. Therefore, cloze activities based on random deletion are easiest to assess as skill-building exercises, allowing for a minimum acceptable score instead of applying an absolute grading scale. When used as placement tests, however, cloze instruments can be correlated against known testing instruments or administered first to individuals with a known skill set in order to develop an accurate grading scale.

Some items may have more than one plausible answer and you can decide whether or not to accept more than one answer. This may change the scoring range and require an adjustment if you use a grading scale. This is another area where you can draw a parallel with medical transcription in that there are so many acceptable alternatives and so many judgment calls. You can have students grade their own cloze exercises or exchange papers with classmates. Ask students to identify items where more than one answer seems correct and encourage them to justify their choices. This will fuel interesting classroom discussions and develop problem-solving skills.

One way to modify a cloze activity, making it easier to score by machine or to administer on the Internet, is to convert it to a multiple choice format. You can craft your own multiple-choice responses or, if you teach multiple classes, you can administer a cloze activity first as a fill-in exercise for one class and then choose among the wrong answers as the distractors for a multiple-choice version you can administer to other classes.

The example on the next page is a random deletion cloze activity built from a consultation report. While blanks should normally be uniform in size to discourage guessing based on the length of the word, you could experiment with blanks of corresponding size or even blanks that indicated the number of letters in the missing word, given that MTs usually do have a notion of the length of a missing word in an actual dictation. Not all of the missing words can be guessed from the context, but the average student should be able to supply roughly 65% of the missing terms, or about 27 of the 41 blanks. The deleted words appear at the end of this article.

If you prefer, change this random deletion cloze exercise to a rational deletion cloze exercise by choosing which words

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Example: Random Deletion Cloze Activity.

The patient is a 68-year-old woman with hypertension, steroid-dependent asthma, chronic low back pain, and about a one-week history of malaise and anorexia. She had recently been _____ off chronic steroid therapy _____ bronchospasm and had noticed _____ 10- to 20-pound _____ loss in the last _____ or so. She apparently _____ 2 weeks ago and _____ worsening back pain. She _____ had urine and fecal _____, diarrhea, fever, and chills. _____ has no known allergies. _____ was admitted to the _____ where she was found _____ be hypotensive with a _____ pressure of 80/50 and _____ temperature of 102 degrees. _____ blood cultures were drawn _____ subsequent days; both grew _____ *coli*. Simultaneous urine cultures _____ negative. When her systolic _____ dropped to 60, she _____ transferred to the ICU. _____ was found to have _____ prerenal azotemia. She was _____ with ceftriaxone at 1 _____ q.12h. and received single _____ of erythromycin and Tobramycin. _____ has remained febrile at _____ degrees since that time. _____ days ago, she was _____ to have an increasing _____ pleural effusion. Thoracentesis yielded _____ fluid which had a _____ count of 29,500 with _____ polys, pH 7.0, and _____ 8. This fluid also _____ *E. coli*. She was _____ on Wednesday, and a _____ tube was placed yielding _____ pus. She has put _____ almost 2 liters of _____ since that time. Yesterday, she was noted to be more lethargic. Two blood cultures drawn yesterday are negative at 24 hours.

are deleted. You can also convert it to a multiple choice exercise by supplying several terms from among which to choose for each blank.

You can find lots of information about cloze activities on the Internet, including programs that will automatically create the activity by deleting random terms or allow you to specify which terms will be deleted. One such application, Rhubarb, not only creates the activity but publishes it as an interactive HTML file, which can be mounted on the Web or opened by students in an off-line browser. Rhubarb files are self-correcting and even supply hints to the student on request. You can find a demo of this inexpensive program at HPI's Web site at <http://www.hpisum.com>. Click on "Free Downloads."

Deleted words from exercise: (1) weaned, (2) for, (3) a, (4) weight, (5) month, (6) fell, (7) had, (8) also, (9) incontinence, (10) She, (11) She, (12) hospital, (13) to, (14) blood, (15) a, (16) Two, (17) on, (18) *E.*, (19) were, (20) pressure, (21) was, (22) She, (23) severe, (24) treated, (25) g, (26) doses, (27) She, (28) 101, (29) Three, (30) noted, (31) right, (32) cloudy, (33) cell, (34) 84%, (35) glucose, (36) grew, (37) extubated, (38) chest, (39) frank, (40) out, (41) fluid.

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