

Thomas Buckingham  
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# CLOZE

# ENCOUNTERS

ESL EXERCISES IN A CULTURAL CONTEXT



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Prentice Hall Regents, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

BUCKINGHAM, THOMAS

*Cloze encounters: ESL exercises in a cultural context.*

1. English language--Text-books for foreign speakers.

I. Yorkey, Richard. II. Title.

PE1128.B83 1984 428.2'4 83-4574

ISBN 0-13-138875-4

Editorial/production supervision and  
interior design: Colleen Brosnan  
Cover design: Ben Santora  
Manufacturing buyer: Harry P. Baisley

© 1984 by Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632

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Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5

ISBN 0-13-138875-4

Prentice-Hall International, Inc., London  
Prentice-Hall of Australia Pty. Limited, Sydney  
Editora Prentice-Hall do Brasil, Ltda., Rio de Janeiro  
Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., Toronto  
Prentice-Hall of India Private Limited, New Delhi  
Prentice-Hall of Japan, Inc., Tokyo  
Prentice-Hall of Southeast Asia Pte. Ltd., Singapore  
Whitehall Books Limited, Wellington, New Zealand

# To the Teacher

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The exercises in this book are intended for students of English as a second language who can read intermediate-level English prose but who need extended practice in selected points of grammar and vocabulary. The book is not intended as a complete course. It should be used with other practice materials in an ESL skills course.

## What Is a Cloze Passage?

The learning technique used here is called a *cloze passage*, a procedure devised originally as a measure of readability and reading ability. (*Cloze* is a technical word, based on the idea of *closure*.) It is a passage of English prose that is within the range of reading ability of a class and that requires students to replace deleted words in order to arrive at a reasonable facsimile of the original meaning.

There are two methods of cloze passages. One, which is used to test English language skills, has words deleted on a regular basis—for example, every fifth, seventh, or tenth word—regardless of part of speech. The other, which has been used as a test of specific aspects of English syntax, has all words systematically deleted that are the part of speech being tested—for example, prepositions, articles, or adverbs of manner. This is the type that is used in this book.

Cloze passages have been successfully used not only to test selected skills of English, such as vocabulary and inflections, but also as a test of the total proficiency of students. This kind of test has achieved good correlations with other tests of English language ability, such as TOEFL. Since it has correlated highly with listening comprehension, a skill that requires the integration of many skills, the cloze test seems to be an effective measure of a generalized control of the language.

## How the Cloze Procedure Teaches

The cloze procedure is an effective means of attacking troublesome problems in English syntax and vocabulary for several reasons. First, as used in this book, the cloze passage provides focused practice on one point at a time. It has long been recognized that students learn more efficiently when they have a limited number of problems to be concerned with. The cloze passage, by providing enough context of English, eliminates the need for students to make a great many decisions; it allows them to concentrate on only one problem at a time.

Second, the procedure allows for the generation of language rather than its mere repetition, and the probability of a correct response is increased because the choice is made from a small but contextualized set of possibilities.

Third, students must integrate several language skills in order to do the exercises. When they select their answers, they must call upon their knowledge of English phonology

by recognizing the rules of the English sound system, call upon their knowledge of English syntax by recognizing the rules of English grammar, call upon their knowledge of English lexicon by recognizing the requirements of the meaning of the entire passage, and call upon their knowledge of English-speaking culture by recognizing appropriate choices of behavior. In most cases the selection of a correct response is governed by more than one of these considerations. Exercises of this kind, therefore, provide opportunity for improvement in several language skills at once.

Finally, cloze passages help students develop an accurate set of expectancies for communicative English that characterize their internalized set of rules. In a sense, teaching English language skills is teaching students what to expect. They learn what phonological, lexical, and grammatical elements legitimately co-occur in English. Since this book provides students with immediate feedback, they get the necessary confirmation of the appropriateness of their responses. This feedback provides the necessary reinforcement for efficient learning.

## How This Book Is Organized

The passages were specially written with two objectives in mind. First, each passage includes a large number of instances (usually about 30) of the particular language problem being focused on but only a small number of choices from which to select an appropriate answer. Second, each passage contains English cultural references—usually American—which allow students to determine characteristic cultural patterns of English.

Because the book is intended as a supplementary text, the passages are not sequenced in any rigid order. Teachers are encouraged to select whatever exercise focuses on the language item that is being presented in class at the time.

## How to Use the Passages

The procedures outlined here have been tested in several classes and have been found to work well, but other procedures may be equally effective. Central to any procedure, however, should be an insistence that students read the entire passage before attempting to make any answers. An item can often be answered by what follows it as well as by what precedes it. In any case, students should be encouraged to use the total grammatical, lexical, and cultural context in order to interpret any portion of English text.

Students should also be informed that a characteristic of the cloze procedure is that several different words can often fill a blank. In the Answer Key at the back of the book we have listed only those words that students actually used during our own classroom trials of this text. One word may be more likely than another, but they all are grammatically correct and appropriate in the context. Your students may surprise you with an unexpected but acceptable word that is not listed here. Or they may wonder why a particular choice is not acceptable. Your students will profit from class discussions that demonstrate the various grammatical constraints, semantic distinctions, stylistic preferences, and connotative subtleties of English.

The following procedures are recommended:

1. Go over the procedures that are outlined in *To the Student*. Encourage students, at least at the beginning, to follow these directions conscientiously.

2. Before assigning the passages for homework, do one or two in class, following the step-by-step directions. Help students at this time by correcting matters of procedure.
3. Generally, use an exercise only after you have presented and practiced in class the particular language item. The purpose of the passage is to generate this kind of review and reinforcement. However, sometimes it may be useful, and enlightening to the students, to use a passage as a “pretest” of a language item. When students discover their need for more instruction and practice, they may be better motivated for what may otherwise seem to be only busywork.

Appreciation is extended to our many ESL students who endured the trials and errors of early versions of these exercises. Special thanks are also due to Sharilyn Wood of the University of Houston Language and Culture Center whose use of many of the exercises in her classes provided us with valuable insights and encouragement.

T. B.  
R. Y.

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# To the Student

---

The exercises in this book may look a little different from others you have practiced. Please turn to page 3 and look at the Trial Passage. You will notice that the exercise looks like a reading exercise except that there are blanks. You have to determine what word should be written in each blank. Look at these sentences as examples:

1. When the driver opened \_\_\_\_\_ door, Bob stepped into the bus.

The only word that you can write in the blank is **the**. You cannot use **a** because the sentence tells about a specific door on a specific bus. You cannot use **his** or **her** because the door does not belong to the driver; it is part of the bus.

2. He paid his \_\_\_\_\_ and took his \_\_\_\_\_ behind the driver.

In the first blank you can write either **money** or **fare**. Either word will complete the sentence with a correct, logical meaning. **Price, fee, or cash** are words that are not used in this particular context. You also cannot write **ticket** because you would also have to use **for** (**he paid for his ticket**). Unless otherwise directed, you can use only one word in each blank.

In the second blank you can write **seat** or **place** because either of these words would be appropriate to the meaning.

This kind of exercise, called a *cloze passage*, is very helpful for learners of English as a second language. Each of the passages in this book focuses on only one grammatical or vocabulary item at a time. For example, one passage will focus on the problem of choosing **a**, **an**, or **the**; another will practice the difference between **remind** and **remember**. The Focus at the top of each exercise identifies the particular point to be practiced.

*STEP 1. Notice the Focus at the top of each passage.* This directs your attention to the language item that you will practice in the passage. An example is also given. The Focus may be on the present continuous tense, and the examples may be **is using, am leaving, are listening**. Any verb that ends in **-ing** can be used in this exercise as long as the tense and the meaning of the verb are appropriate to the situation.

*STEP 2. Read through the entire passage but do not write anything.* Read the passage completely in order to understand as much as you can. At first try to get only a general meaning. You can try to guess at some of the words that might go into the blanks, but do not write them in yet.

*STEP 3. Go back to the beginning and write in all the words.* Read the first sentence that has a blank in it. Determine what word best suits the meaning, and then write it in the blank. Remember that each blank can be filled with only one word, or occasionally one phrase, such as **was going**, or **look at**. Continue through the exercise in this way, using whatever grammatical, lexical, or cultural information you can to help you determine an appropriate word for each blank.



*STEP 4.* Read the entire passage again for meaning. After you have corrected the exercise, go back to the beginning and read the passage completely. See if you understand its full meaning.

*STEP 5.* Complete the Comprehension Check which follows. Do not look back at the passage. Try to remember the information and answer the questions. This is a brief test of your understanding of the passage. Answering four out of five questions correctly is considered a good score. It indicates you have understood the passage well.

*STEP 6.* Check your answers with the Answer Key. After you have completed all the blanks in the passage, turn to the Answer Key at the back of the book and correct the exercise. The words that are included for each blank are all appropriate answers. There may be other uncommon but equally possible answers; therefore, if you think that your answer might be possible, even though it is not listed in the Answer Key, check with your teacher.

*STEP 7.* Record your Scores for both the Cloze Exercise and the Comprehension Check. This record is on page 77.

*STEP 8. (Optional)* Using one of the suggested Composition Topics which follow, write a composition, including some of the suggested words so that you can practice the grammatical focus one more time.

## A Favorite Pastime

---

FOCUS: Verb + **-s** for third person singular in present tense (for example, **he likes, she wants, it rains**)

---

Review the steps and then complete this sample exercise.

1. Look at the Focus and the examples.
2. Read through the passage but do not write anything.
3. Do the exercise, writing only one word in each blank.
4. Check your answers with the Answer Key.
5. Read the entire passage again for meaning.
6. Complete the Comprehension Check.
7. Record your Scores.
8. Write a Composition. (This step may not be required and is not included in the trial passage.)

Bob is a bookkeeper for a large department store in the city. He is very busy all day, so when he (1) \_\_\_\_\_ home at night, he (2) \_\_\_\_\_ to do something relaxing. After dinner, he often (3) \_\_\_\_\_ the whole evening sitting in a comfortable chair by the fire reading a book. Sometimes he (4) \_\_\_\_\_ himself a drink before he (5) \_\_\_\_\_ down to read. He has several good books piled beside his chair, but he often (6) \_\_\_\_\_ a new one at the bookstore that he (7) \_\_\_\_\_ to read, and he (8) \_\_\_\_\_ it for his large collection. He (9) \_\_\_\_\_ every weeknight in this way, but on weekends he usually (10) \_\_\_\_\_ out dancing with his girlfriend.

### Comprehension Check

Write one word for each answer.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Bob usually comes home and (**reads/dances/cooks**).
2. \_\_\_\_\_ He sits in a chair beside the (**bookcase/door/fireplace**).



3. \_\_\_\_\_ Sometimes he buys a new (**chair/book/drink**).
4. \_\_\_\_\_ He does all of this about (**two/five/seven**)  
times a week.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Bob (**owns/wants/needs**) a large collection of  
books.

Check your answers on page 79.

Now record your scores on page 77.

## CLOZE ENCOUNTER 1

# My Neighbors

---

FOCUS: **am, is, are**

---

I live in a new apartment building. It (1) \_\_\_\_\_ a good place to live. The neighborhood (2) \_\_\_\_\_ very quiet, and it (3) \_\_\_\_\_ not too far from the place I work. My neighbors (4) \_\_\_\_\_ very friendly. In the apartment down the hall there (5) \_\_\_\_\_ two girls. One (6) \_\_\_\_\_ tall and has red hair; the other one (7) \_\_\_\_\_ not as tall. She (8) \_\_\_\_\_ a blond. They (9) \_\_\_\_\_ both very attractive. I (10) \_\_\_\_\_ lucky to have such pretty neighbors. A very pleasant woman (11) \_\_\_\_\_ in the apartment across the hall. She and her husband (12) \_\_\_\_\_ very good cooks. I (13) \_\_\_\_\_ usually hungry when I come home at night, and the smell of their cooking (14) \_\_\_\_\_ very attractive. Their son lives with them. All of them (15) \_\_\_\_\_ very fat.

I (16) \_\_\_\_\_ curious about the people who live downstairs. I (17) \_\_\_\_\_ sure that the husband (18) \_\_\_\_\_ American, but I don't think that his wife (19) \_\_\_\_\_. Perhaps she (20) \_\_\_\_\_ from Venezuela, or maybe she (21) \_\_\_\_\_ Colombian. I (22) \_\_\_\_\_ not sure. We (23) \_\_\_\_\_ always friendly and speak when we meet. I (24) \_\_\_\_\_ going to invite them to dinner sometime, but my apartment (25) \_\_\_\_\_ not really settled yet, since I (26) \_\_\_\_\_ still unpacking my things and putting them away. When you (27) \_\_\_\_\_ just arriving in a new place, you (28) \_\_\_\_\_ never sure where anything (29) \_\_\_\_\_. Nevertheless, I (30) \_\_\_\_\_ quite happy in my new home.

## Comprehension Check

Write the boldface word that makes the statement true.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Does the writer live in **an apartment** or a **house**?
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Has the author lived there a **short** time or a **long** time?
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Is the woman downstairs **North** American or **South** American?



4. \_\_\_\_\_ Are the people down the hall **married** or **single**?
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Does the fat couple live **next door** or **across the hall**?

## Write Now

Write a short paragraph about neighbors you have now. Include the following constructions in your sentences:

**I am**

**you, we, they are**

**he, she, it is**

## A Nice Place to Work

---

FOCUS: in, on, at, near

---

My office is very pleasant and comfortable. It's (1) \_\_\_\_\_ the third floor (2) \_\_\_\_\_ a tall building downtown. My name has been neatly printed (3) \_\_\_\_\_ a metal sign and mounted (4) \_\_\_\_\_ my office door. Inside, there are some bookshelves, a desk, and a small table. The desk is (5) \_\_\_\_\_ a very large window. From the window I can look down (6) \_\_\_\_\_ the streets. I can see people walking (7) \_\_\_\_\_ and out of the buildings (8) \_\_\_\_\_ mine and waiting (9) \_\_\_\_\_ the streets. I have a large, comfortable chair (10) \_\_\_\_\_ my desk, and another chair (11) \_\_\_\_\_ the bookcase for visitors. I try to keep my books really well-arranged (12) \_\_\_\_\_ their proper order (13) \_\_\_\_\_ the shelves. (14) \_\_\_\_\_ my desk there are various objects including a telephone and my typewriter. I keep my files and papers (15) \_\_\_\_\_ a large drawer, and pens, paper clips, and other small articles (16) \_\_\_\_\_ a smaller drawer. My desk always looks quite messy since there are always books and papers (17) \_\_\_\_\_ it. (18) \_\_\_\_\_ the wall there is a bulletin board. I keep a calendar (19) \_\_\_\_\_ it so that I won't forget my appointments. I always try to be (20) \_\_\_\_\_ time for my appointments.

(21) \_\_\_\_\_ one of the drawers of my desk I keep some food. I usually eat lunch (22) \_\_\_\_\_ my desk because there are no inexpensive restaurants (23) \_\_\_\_\_ my office building. (24) \_\_\_\_\_ those days when I have to eat (25) \_\_\_\_\_ my office, I open my desk drawer promptly (26) \_\_\_\_\_ one o'clock and take out something to eat. I put some hot water (27) \_\_\_\_\_ a cup and make some instant soup, and perhaps eat some cheese and crackers. When my friends come (28) \_\_\_\_\_, they laugh. They call me "the man (29) \_\_\_\_\_ a hurry" because I can't take time (30) \_\_\_\_\_ those busy days to eat lunch with



them (31) \_\_\_\_\_ one of the fancy restaurants  
(32) \_\_\_\_\_ our building.

## Comprehension Check

Write the boldface word or words that make the statement true.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Is my office **in** a tall building or **near** a tall building?
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Do I see people walking **on the sidewalks** or **in my office**?
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Do I eat at **one** o'clock or at **two** o'clock?
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Do I keep my files and papers **on my desk** or **in a drawer**?
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Do I like to eat in **fancy** restaurants or in **cheap** restaurants?

## Write Now

Using the words **in**, **at**, **on**, and **near**, write a paragraph in which you describe a room in your house or school. Use each of these words more than once.