Comprehension Questions for SALT Narrative Story Retells

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Background
As an SLP using the SALT Narrative Story Retells in my elementary school practice, it became clear that a good addition to this evaluation would be comprehension questions for each of the stories. Every classroom teacher uses comprehension as a measure of reading ability, and reading assessments use comprehension as a way to gauge a student's reading level. Often teachers mention that the student can decode the text of a book, but not accurately answer comprehension questions about the story. The comprehension questions described in this document were developed with the help of my colleagues in the Madison Metropolitan School District. These questions were piloted by the SALT committee with students from our district for evaluation and progress monitoring. Based on the result of the pilot, we revised the questions and asked the rest of our SLP colleagues to use them with their SALT samples. The feedback was positive and our group felt that these questions add a simple but powerful tool to aid in evaluation and therapy for SLPs. After Bloom's Taxonomy was revised (Anderson, Krathwall and Bloom, 2001; Wilson, 2013), these questions were further updated using the newer taxonomy.

The Comprehension Questions
Comprehension questions were developed for the following stories included in the SALT Narrative Story Retell database: *Frog, Where Are You?* (Mayer, 1969), *A Porcupine Named Fluffy* (Lester, 1986), *Pookins Gets Her Way* (Lester, 1987), and *Doctor De Soto* (Steig, 1982).

Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, et al., 1956), revised by Anderson, Krathwohl, & Bloom (2001) and explained by Leslie Owen Wilson (2013), provides a framework for six types of questions with each level requiring more cognitive demand and higher order thinking. These questions help inform the SLP about the student's thinking skills and where comprehension breakdowns occur. Each story has 18 corresponding questions (three for each category). The hierarchy of the question categories includes:

1. Remembering requires the student to recall information by recognizing, listing, describing, retrieving, naming, and finding.
2. Understanding requires the student to explain ideas or concepts by interpreting, summarizing, paraphrasing, classifying, and explaining.
3. Applying requires the student to use information in another familiar situation by implementing, carrying out, and executing.
4. Analyzing requires the student to break information into parts to examine understanding and relationships by comparing, organizing, deconstructing, and interrogating.
5. Evaluating requires the student to justify a decision or course of action by checking, hypothesizing, critiquing, experimenting, and judging.
6. Creating requires the student to generate new ideas, products, or ways of viewing things by designing, constructing, planning, producing, and inventing.

Administration
Choose the story that is appropriate for the student's age, grade, and linguistic ability. Refer to the SALT web site at http://saltsoftware.com/resources/databases for tables listing these stories by the student's age and grade. After the student finishes retelling the story, ask the student to answer the comprehension questions for that story. Ask the questions in order of occurrence, following the Bloom's Taxonomy hierarchy for comprehension. Prompts for further detail are acceptable, such as "can you tell me more?". These prompts should be noted as they may provide further language information about the student's learning style.

Scoring
Using the response form, score the student's response to each question based on the 0-2 scale. Scoring guidelines are provided. There is room below each question to write the student's response if necessary or desired. A slash

between options on the scoresheet indicates that any one of those responses is correct. Do not penalize for syntax errors; the purpose is to evaluate critical thinking skills. A score of 2 is given for correct and complete answers. A score of 1 is given for less complete answers and/or heavily prompted responses. A score of 0 is given for questions that are not answered, responses unrelated to the question, or incorrect responses. There are 36 possible points, with higher scores indicating better comprehension skills. Note that, although it is possible to score the student's responses in real time, you may find it easier to score them later from an audio recording.

Interpretation
The real value comes from looking at the type of question the student *can* answer. The questions become more difficult as they require higher intellectual ability beyond basic knowledge of facts. Sharing this outcome and receiving corroborating information from classroom teachers and parents is important and illuminating. It enables the SLP to form a more complete picture of the student's abilities as well as highlight areas for goal development and the direction of therapy. The questions, which can be related to other comprehension measures, provide another opportunity to have reluctant speakers expand on their thoughts and express what they know. Please note that comprehension scoring was not applied to the samples included in the SALT Narrative Story Retell database.

Summary
Working on goals that encompass comprehension issues will impact the student's classroom performance. The same framework of hierarchical questions can be used with other short stories to promote comprehension (Fisher & Frey, 2014). This is a meaningful, engaging, and practical way to use literature to develop comprehension with language impaired students.

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Sample Comprehension Questions

The following comprehension questions are selected from the various categories and stories. 25-sheet scoring pads with the complete set of comprehension questions for each story are included in the Story Retell Elicitation Materials.

Category: **Remember** (recall information)
Story: **Frog, Where Are You?**

QUESTION	STUDENT RESPONSE	SCORE
Who is looking for the frog?	The boy AND the dog	2
	The boy OR the dog	1
	Don't know/unrelated/wrong answer	0
What chased the dog?	Bees	2
	Other similar insects, *e.g., hornets, wasps*	1
	Don't know/unrelated/wrong answer	0
Where did the boy finally find the frog?	Behind a log AND at a pond/by the water	2
	Behind a log/over a log/at a pond/by the water	1
	Don't know/unrelated/wrong answer	0

Category: **Understand** (explain ideas or concepts)
Story: **A Porcupine Named Fluffy**

QUESTION	STUDENT RESPONSE	SCORE
Who is the main character?	Fluffy the porcupine	2
	Fluffy OR the porcupine	1
	Don't know/unrelated/wrong answer	0
What does it mean to "lay exhausted on the ground"?	To be really tired	2
	Laying on the ground	1
	Don't know/unrelated/wrong answer	0
What is the main problem of the story?	Fluffy's name does not match the way he looks	2
	Fluffy's name/Fluffy doesn't like his name	1
	Don't know/unrelated/wrong answer	0

Category: **Apply** (use information in another familiar situation)
Story: **Pookins Gets Her Way**

QUESTION	STUDENT RESPONSE	SCORE
What does a flower need to grow?	Soil AND water AND sun	2
	Soil/water/sun/seeds/garden/pot/container (lists any 2)	1
	Don't know/unrelated/wrong answer	0
Why didn't Pookins like being a flower?	She couldn't move/she couldn't have her own way/she was bored/she had to stay in the sun/she was very wet (lists 2 of 5)	2
	A reasonable answer related to the story, *e.g., it was not fun*	1
	Don't know/unrelated/wrong answer	0
How did Pookins help the gnome?	She protected him from the rain so he wouldn't lose his magic powers	2
	She helped him	1
	Don't know/unrelated/wrong answer	0

Category: **Analyze** (break information into parts to explore relationships)
Story: **Doctor De Soto**

QUESTION	STUDENT RESPONSE	SCORE
If the fox's mouth was not glued, what would have happened?	The fox might have eaten/bitten Dr. De Soto and his wife	2
	Something bad	1
	Don't know/unrelated/wrong answer	0
How is a dentist different from a doctor?	Contrasts with mention of both a dentist AND a doctor, *e.g., a dentist only works on teeth and doctors don't work on teeth*	2
	They are different types of doctors/they don't do the same things	1
	Don't know/unrelated/wrong answer	0
Do you think the special formula will prevent further toothaches? Why?	No, WITH rationale, *e.g., because it was just glue so the fox couldn't eat the mouse/because it was a trick*	2
	No, WITHOUT rationale	1
	Don't know/unrelated/wrong answer	0

Category: **Evaluate** (justify decision or course of action)
Story: **Frog, Where Are You?**

QUESTION	STUDENT RESPONSE	SCORE
How did the boy feel when the deer lifted him up?	Surprised/scared/afraid	2
	Mad/angry	1
	Don't know/unrelated/wrong answer	0
Do you think it's a good idea to keep a frog as a pet? Why or why not?	Yes/no WITH rationale	2
	Yes/no WITHOUT rationale	1
	Don't know/unrelated/wrong answer	0
What is the best pet to have and why?	Pet listed WITH rationale	2
	Pet listed WITHOUT rationale	1
	Don't know/unrelated/wrong answer	0

Category: **Create** (generate new ideas or ways of viewing things)
Story: **A Porcupine Named Fluffy**

QUESTION	STUDENT RESPONSE	SCORE
What would you do if you had a name that didn't fit you?	Use a nickname/ask to be called something else	2
	Nothing/just accept my name	1
	Don't know/unrelated/wrong answer	0
What would you do if you met someone with a strange name?	Ask how they got their name/say "unique name"/say "neat name"/say something else nice	2
	Don't say or do anything	1
	Don't know/unrelated/wrong answer	0
Why did Fluffy and Hippo become best friends?	They both had funny names that made them understand each other/they had odd names in common	2
	They were both animals	1
	Don't know/unrelated/wrong answer	0