

How to Use Prompters (Novice Level)

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11.6.2019

A Prompter is a list of words that helps the teacher tell the story. The Prompter helps the teacher remember to 1) keep track of the story and use the new language, 2) prepare ways of making the new language more comprehensible ("Comprehension-aiding supplementation"), and 3) add interest and depth to the story.

Preparing a Prompter in advance, frees the teacher to focus on the story. It allows the teacher the opportunity to determine if the students understand the story and gives the teacher the chance to supply the right assistance when needed.

Simple ways of doing Comprehension-Aiding Supplementation include (1) visual supplementation, which includes drawings, facial expressions (e.g., surprise, sleepy, angry, happy, etc.), and physical movements (walk, run, sit, crouch, hide, etc.). (2) linguistic supplementation, such as writing the words on the board, rephrasing using simpler words (synonyms), and providing occasional translations, and (3) taking advantage of the students' knowledge of everyday life.

Not every word in the story should be included in the Prompter, and not every unfamiliar word in the Prompter needs to be made 100% comprehensible. The goal is only that the story becomes reasonably clear and makes sense. It is important that the teacher should not become too ambitious, and try to include too many new words. Using too many unknown words with Comprehension-Aiding Supplementation will overwhelm the students, disturb the flow of the story and prevent the story from providing context that helps make unfamiliar words more comprehensible.

The goal of the use of the Prompter is not full mastery of prompted words; Students gradually acquire the full meanings of new words as they hear and read them again and again. The purpose of the use of the Prompter is to remind the teacher to include certain items in the presentation of the story, as well as provide supplementation to help comprehension of the story. Prompted items may include language the students already know, or they may be the items the students are meeting for the first time. Students are different, and the teacher cannot know precisely what kind of background they have had in their language studies before their coming to class.

The following is an example of how a Prompter is used at the novice level, the simplest application. It is not a script to be followed but is presented here as an example of what a teacher might do.

In this case, we assume that the student had heard and had understood several stories before this one, stories that also began with "Once upon a time," which had been explained already.

Here is the start of the story:

"Once upon a time there was a little girl. She was an orphan: Both her parents had died. She was very poor. She had no home and little to eat, only a piece of bread. A

nice person gave her a piece of bread. She had only the clothes she wore.”

The first three sentences contain 18 words and three of these words are assumed to be unfamiliar and are prompted: *orphan*, *parents*, and *died*. As we shall see, several familiar words are also prompted, including some that are not in the story.

The SL teacher, of course, starts with the first sentence. “Once upon a time, there was a little girl.” Even though the word, “girl” is already known, it is a good idea to prompt it and draw a picture. This picture will be useful later on when dealing with the unfamiliar word “*parent*.” The teacher draws a picture of a girl – just a face, without the body and legs. The drawing should be done quickly; the teacher should not take the time to draw an elaborate picture.



Students at this level will also know the word “little,” but there is no harm in providing context in the form of gestures or pictures, e.g. draw a big girl and a little girl, crossing out the big girl or use hand gestures to represent “little” as contrasted with “big.”



The next word on the prompter list is “orphan.” In order to introduce this word, the girl must have parents who die. So, the teacher introduces the words *mother* and *father*, and draws their pictures above the picture of the girl. Again, even though the words, “mother” and “father” are already known, it will be useful to write them, as we will see a little later.

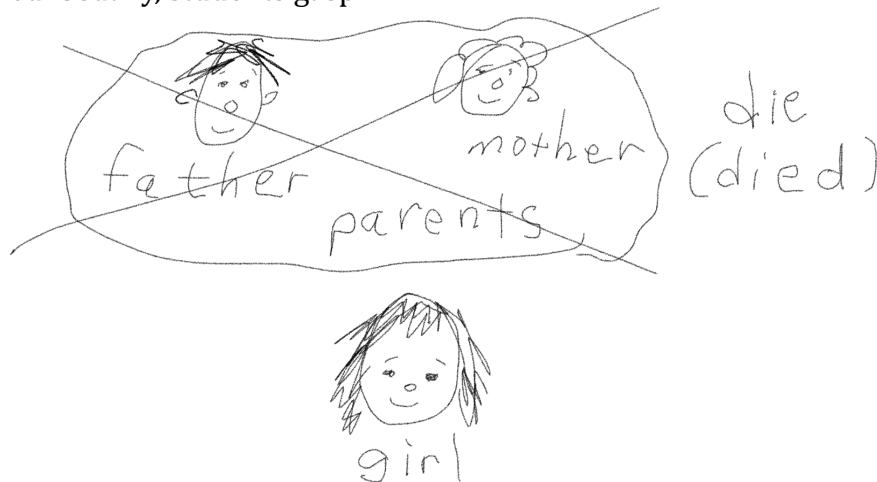


The teacher then says, “The little girl had a mother and a father” and writes “mother”

and "father" under the pictures, with lines leading from the mother and father to the girl, and says: "They were the girl's parents." The teacher writes "parents" under the words, "mother" and "father."



The teacher then writes, "*died*" and says: "Her mother and father died." The teacher crosses out the parents' faces and says, "They died." The teacher gestures someone's death and looks around the class to make sure that the students understood that the parents died. Usually, students gasp.



The teacher then says: "Mother and father died, so she is now an orphan." The teacher then writes "orphan" on the board.



Before continuing, here is a brief review of some important points:

1. The Prompter may include words not in the story in order to help drawing unfamiliar words.
2. The Prompter may include words students already know. (Some may be only

partially acquired: In these cases, the additional prompting may increase the level of acquisition.)

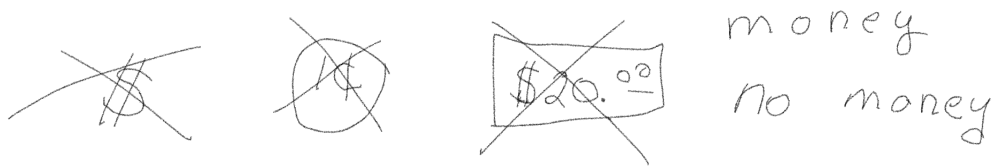
Here is the next part of the story:

“She was very poor. She had no home and had little to eat, only a piece of bread. A nice person gave her the piece of bread. She had only the clothes she wore.”

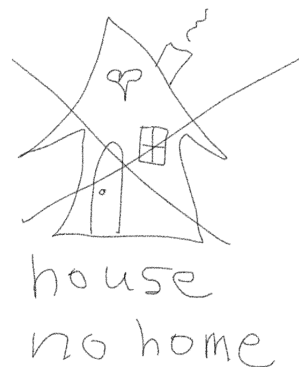
Prompter list is: *poor, home, eat, little to eat, a piece of ~, bread, nice, clothes, wore.*

The teacher continues; “The girl was poor. She had no money. She did not have any money. She was very poor.”

Most students will know what “money” is, but there is no harm in drawing a \$ sign along with a few coins and paper money (e.g. dollars).



The teacher continues: “She did not have a house. She did not have a home. She had no home.” The teacher draws a picture of a “house.” She writes down, “house” under the drawing. The teacher draws a big cross on the house, and says, “She had no home.” The teacher writes, “No home” under the house with a big cross on it. There is no need at this stage to explain the difference between “house” and “home,” unless a student asks. (The teacher has prepared an answer, such as “A house is a real building. A home is a house that belongs to somebody....”).



In the story, a kind person gave the girl a piece of bread; the teacher can introduce the kind person before introducing “She had nothing to eat.” She then creates a separate scene: “One day, a man came to her.” She draws a picture of a man approaching the girl.



The teacher says, "A man gave her bread. He gave her a piece of bread." The teacher draws a picture of a man giving her a piece of bread. The teacher writes down, "give" and "gave."



The teacher says; "The little girl said "thank you" to the kind man. He was a kind man. He was a nice man. Now she had a little to eat. Before she had nothing to eat, but now she has a little to eat."

The teacher gives synonyms for "kind" and "nice" (e.g., good, e.g. friendly) and/or a translation.



The teacher points at the house with a big cross on it, and uses the word, "orphan" again, "She was an orphan. She had no parents. Also, she didn't have a house. She had no home. She had no place to live." The teacher writes down, "no place to live" under "no home."



The teacher continues: "The girl was wearing one skirt, one shirt, one jacket, and one hat."



“They were the only clothes she had. She wore a skirt, a shirt, a jacket, and a hat. She did not have a sweater.” The teacher draws these clothes, labels the drawing “clothes” and may point to those wearing these clothes in the class.



Note that the teacher presents words that students might already know, leading to fuller comprehension and acquisition. The students may already know the word “clothes” but because it is very important to the story, the teacher provides more supplementation and more and deeper information about the word.

How to Use Prompters (Upper-Levels)

At the beginning level, visual supplementation plays a major role. At more advanced levels, however, input is more linguistically complex, and topics are less concrete, and more linguistic supplementation is used. Stories at this level are longer and require more imagination and often make a deeper emotional connection. An upper-level story sometimes lasts as long as 40 to 50 minutes, or even 80 minutes. Preparations for upper-level stories is therefore different from preparation for beginning level lessons.

Specifically, 1) The teacher will look for longer and more complex stories, which means the Prompter list will become longer; 2) It will take more time to prepare the story; 3) It will take more time to tell the story; 4) The words on the list will be more difficult to explain; 5) It will become more difficult to remember the flow of the story; 6) The story will be more complicated: it will be divided into chapters or acts, possibly with a number of characters, and more complicated events. The teacher will have to remember who the characters are and what the important events are, and all this will require more rehearsal than for beginning level stories.

“Easy to tell Stories” is not determined by the length of the texts

Many stories are written from around 1,500 to 2,500 words, although some stories are over 4000 words. “Short,” however, does not always mean “easy.” Some “short stories” contain a high percentage of challenging words. I use the story “Strong Hans” with more advanced college students of English in Japan. It contains 2616 words. My prompter list for this story contains 197 items (Appendix 1)! I don’t provide Comprehension Assisting Supplementation for each word when I tell the story, but there is a great deal of new language in this relatively short story. As noted earlier, it is not a good idea for the teacher to become too ambitious in introducing new words.

The Key Words in the Prompter

We now review the use of the Prompter in stories well beyond the novice level. Students at

this level have not only heard many stories, but have also been engaged in Guided Self-Selected Reading (Mason,2019) for at least two years, which means they have acquired a considerable amount of vocabulary and grammar, as well as information.

As was the case with stories at the novice level, the Prompter helps the teacher to remember to 1) keep track of the story and use the new language, 2) Prepare ways of making the new language more comprehensible (“Comprehension-aiding supplementation”) which will help make the story more comprehensible and aid in the gradual acquisition of the new items, and 3) Add interest and depth to the story.

Here is an example from. “Mosquito,” a story from Asia. This story is about concepts such as hard labor, true love, deception, falsehood, betrayal, secret, trust, fidelity, frivolousness, obedience, false expectations, respect, wisdom, and cruelty. Students understand what these words mean from hearing the explanations of the words and from the context provided by the story, and from their personal experiences.

“There was a young couple who were poor farmers. The husband loved his wife, and he worked hard to improve their **station in life**. He was kind to her and not **demanding**. His love for her was **genuine**. His wife was young and pretty, but she was a **coquette**.”

The prompter words in this case are “station in life,” “demanding,” “genuine,” and “coquette.”

These words can be explained using synonyms, explanations, and descriptions. Here is what the teacher might say for each of the prompted words listed above. As usual, the explanation is in the target language, but translation can be used when helpful.

Station in life: the husband worked hard. He worked hard to make money, from early morning till late at night, because they were poor. They were dressed poorly. They could not go to nice places because they did not have money, but they were also in a lower class. He wanted to climb up the class ladder. He wanted to join the group of people that were above his class. In Japan, there were four different social classes: the highest class was the warriors, the second was the farmers, then the craftsmen, and the lowest class was the tradesmen. (The teacher can illustrate this with a diagram on the board.) He wanted to go to a higher social class. He wanted to improve their **station in life**. “Station” here does not mean a train station. It means the position in the society: the rank, the social class.

Demanding: He did not tell his wife to do many things. He did not expect her to do many things for him. He did not say, “Make breakfast!” “Bring me tea!” “Clean the house!” “Work hard!” He did not ask her to do many things for him. He did not demand much. **He was not demanding.**

Genuine: He loved her very much. He did not look at other girls. He did not flirt with other women. He did not want other girls. He loved her truly. His love was true. His love for her was **genuine**.

Coquette: His wife was a dishonest woman who tried to get men's attention and loved using her physical beauty to attract men. Her love for her husband was not genuine. She winked at men when her husband was not watching. She liked men. She was a **coquette**.

Cultural and historical information in the Prompter

Most of the stories used in the SL lessons are stories from other countries where the background cultures are different from the culture of the students. Some explanations are often necessary as some of the words demand clarification of the customs in that country.

For example, in a short story, "Cat Woman," the Greek Goddess, the character "Aphrodite," needs to be described. Cat Woman can be found in the appendix and at:

<http://www.storyarts.org/library/nutshell/stories/catwoman.html>

Many western stories mention Christianity, and use the words like "Baptism" and "Water needed for Christening." "William Tell" is about a man who freed Switzerland from Austria" (In the year 1307). "Daniel in the Lion' Den" is a story from 2300 years ago (323-30 BC) about jealousy and religious belief. The purpose of stories in Story Listening sessions is not to teach culture, morals, or any belief system, but with upper-level SL lessons, some explanations and comments on these topics are helpful for comprehension.

It often takes more than 40-minutes to tell a story at the upper-level SL lesson; it also takes more time to prepare and more effort to deliver the story. It requires more knowledge of the rules of the language when the students start asking questions. For an advanced class, linguistic supplementation is the most often used, and drawings are seldom used. The rate of speech is almost at a normal speech rate, and the teacher often inserts her comments on the events and characters in the story. Stories for advanced students are often very interesting for the teacher, but at the same time they require more effort.

References

Grimm Brothers' Household Tales: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2591/2591-0.txt>

Krashen, S., Mason, B., & Smith, K. (2018). Some new terminology: comprehension-Aiding supplementation and form-focusing supplementation. *Language Learning and Teaching*, 60(6), 12-13.

Mason, B. (2019). Guided SSR before self-selected reading. *Shitennoji University Journal*, 6, 445-456.

Appendix 1: A Promoter prepared for Japanese college students for “Strong Hans”

1.	quite alone	かなりひとりぼっち	53.	in earnest	真剣に
2.	solitary	孤独な	54.	entrance-door	入り口
3.	valley	盆地、谷間	55.	fetch	とってくる
4.	It came to pass that ~	～が起こった	56.	darkness	暗さ
5.	branches of fir	もみの木の枝	57.	daylight	昼の光
6.	take pleasure in ~	～するのが楽しい	58.	a couple of hours	2 時間
7.	go further	もっと遠くに行く	59.	doorway	出入り口
8.	onwards	前方へ	60.	regard ~ as dead	死んだものとみなす
9.	robber(s)	強盗	61.	a head taller than	頭一つ～より背が高い
10.	spring out of	～から飛び出る	62.	crack	鋭い音をたてて裂ける
11.	thicket	雑木林	63.	cellar	穴倉
12.	seize	掴む	64.	God save us!	神よ助けたまえ！
13.	carry ~ far away	遠くに連れて行く	65.	Don't let that turn your hair grey	心配するな
14.	black forest	黒い森	66.	bullock(s)	去勢した雄牛
15.	from one year's end to another	一年中	67.	draw	引っ張る
16.	urgently	執拗に	68.	crunch and crack	バリバリがنگん
17.	beg	頼む、懇願する	69.	fir-tree	もみの木
18.	set ~ free	～を自由にする	70.	wound round	周りを絡み付かれた
19.	made of stone	石で出来ている	71.	like a rope	綱のように
20.	entreaty	懇願、嘆願	72.	from the bottom to the top	底から頂上まで
21.	by force	力ずくで	73.	upwards	上に向かって
22.	bushes and briars	低木やいばらの茂み	74.	faggots	鉄棒の束
23.	passage	通路	75.	Fir-Twister	もみの木をよる
24.	sword(s)	刀	76.	knock and hammer	ぶち当てたり打ったり
25.	sabre (saber)	軍刀、サーベル	77.	shake at every stroke	一撃ごとに揺れる
26.	deadly weapon(s)	命取りの武器	78.	giant	巨人
27.	gleam	薄明かり	79.	fist	拳
28.	gamble	賭け	80.	vermin	有害小動物
29.	captain	首領	81.	sniff	鼻を鳴らして匂いをかぐ
30.	at the head of ~	～の頭に	82.	snuffle	鼻をクンクン言わせる
31.	be at ease	安心する	83.	Rock-Splitter	岩を分割する人
32.	fear	恐れる	84.	consented	承諾する
33.	look after	面倒を見る	85.	roam	放浪する
34.	housekeeping	家事	86.	wild beast(s)	野生の獣
35.	fare ill with ~	～にとって巧くいかない	87.	terrified	怯える
36.	thereupon	そのあとすぐに	88.	deserted castle	さびれた城
37.	knight(s)	騎士	89.	thorn(s)	とげ
38.	cave	洞窟	90.	bramble(s)	とげのある低木
39.	club	こん棒	91.	boar	去勢しない雄ぶた (猪)
40.	out of a branch of fir	もみの木の枝から	92.	spit	焼きぐし
41.	hide (hid)	隠れる	93.	roast	焼く、あぶる
42.	silent	静かにしている	94.	nine pounds of meat	9 ポンドの肉
43.	moreover	そのうえ、さらに	95.	be busy cooking	料理で忙しくする
44.	godless	罪深い	96.	shriveled-up	縮んで小さくなった
45.	robbing expedition	強盗するための遠征	97.	mannikin	小人
46.	box	拳で打つ事	98.	Be off	あっちへ行け
47.	hold his tongue	黙る	99.	sneak	下劣な
48.	stout strong club	どっしりした強いこん棒	100.	imp	小鬼
49.	vigorous box	強力なげんこつ	101.	insignificant	取るに足らない
50.	full of admiration for ~	～感心で満ちて	102.	dwarf	こびと
51.	bravery	勇敢さ	103.	belabor	くどくどと述べる
52.	strength	力	104.	defend	防御する
			105.	gasp for breath	息を求めて喘ぐ
			106.	thoroughly	徹底的に

107. vent ~ on ~	～に～を発散する	162. steal ~ away	さらう
108. anger	怒り	163. imprison	牢屋に閉じ込める
109. ill-treated by ~	～によって虐待される	164. watchman	警備員
110. willing	喜んでする	165. suffer misery	惨めさで苦しめる
111. clearly	疑いも泣く	166. vexation enough	十分イライラさせる
112. suffer	苦しむ	167. trust	信頼
113. skim シチューの鍋から油をすくい取る		168. false	偽りの
114. pan	鍋	169. design against ~	～に対しての悪巧み
115. without more ado 余計な事は言わずに		170. out of the depths	奈落から
116. demand	要求する	171. counsel	相談
117. a piece of meat	ひとかけらの肉	172. backwards and forwards	行ったり来たり
118. wretch	哀れな奴	173. ring	指輪
119. share	分かち合う	174. sparkle	光る
120. hand	手渡す	175. turn round	回す
121. a bit	少し	176. rustle	さらさらという音が立つ
122. devour	がつつ食べる	177. spirits of the air	空気の霊
123. asked for	欲しいという	178. hover above ~	～の上を空中を舞う
124. good-natured	やさしい	179. struck dumb	驚いて何も言えない、啞然とする
125. content with	～に満足する	180. obey	従う
126. for the third time	三回目に	181. on the sea	海上
127. shameless	厚かましい	182. perceive	気がつく
128. malicious	悪意のある	183. faithless	不誠実な
129. treat	扱う	184. comrade	仲間
130. wrong man	人違い	185. in fierce anger	すざましい怒りで
131. exert much	尽力する	186. leap (leapt)	跳ねる、跳ぶ
132. blow(s)	強打	187. weigh	重さを量る
133. castle step(s)	城の階段	188. drag	引きずる
134. be about to	～しようとする	189. drown	溺れる
135. run after~	～の後を追う	190. in the very nick of time	間一髪で
136. fall right over	ころぶ	191. bear	運ぶ
137. flat on his face	顔を打つ	192. as swift as ~	～ほど速く
138. slip into	滑るように入る	193. lightning	稲妻
139. mark	印をつける	194. merit	(非難などに)値する
140. spot	場所	195. in the greatest alarm	非常に危機を感じて
141. no longer	もはや～ない	196. rejoice	大喜びする
142. conceal	隠す	197. exceedingly	抜群に
143. served ~ right	ざまあみろ		
144. mean	さもしい		
145. disgrace	恥		
146. basket	かご		
147. rope	綱		
148. grin at	にやっと笑う		
149. bound with~	～で縛られる		
150. chains	鎖		
151. mournfully	もの悲しそうに		
152. felt great pity for	～を気の毒に感じる		
153. think to oneself	考える		
154. deliver ~ out of ~	～を～から救う		
155. wicked	邪悪な		
156. fall down dead	転げ落ちて死ぬ		
157. immediately	即座に		
158. enraptured with ~	～にうっとりする		
159. her beauty	彼女の美しさ		
160. savage	残忍な		
161. count	伯爵		

Appendix 2

Cat Woman

<http://www.storyarts.org/library/nutshell/stories/catwoman.html>

A Tale from Greece

There was once a man who had a beautiful cat. She was so loving that one day he wished out loud, "Dear Cat, if you were only a woman, I'd marry you!"

Aphrodite, the goddess of love, heard his wish and changed the cat into a beautiful woman. The man and the cat woman were married and lived quite happily together until one night . . .

The beautiful woman was sitting on her bed and into the room came a mouse. She crouched on her hands and knees, pounced on the mouse, and began to eat it, much to her husband's alarm!

Aphrodite looked down from the clouds and, seeing this, turned the woman back into a cat. Aphrodite chuckled, "I can change the outer appearance of a creature, but to truly make a difference, I guess I must change its inner character first!"