

Explicitly teaching Year 2 students to paraphrase will improve their reading comprehension

Abstract

This research project began with the recognition that many students' ability to read and decode text is higher than their ability to understand and comprehend the text they are reading. It is not uncommon for many students in Year 2 and above, who are reading at a text level of 28 and above, to struggle to understand what they have read.

The hypothesis of this study is that explicitly teaching Year 2 students to paraphrase will improve their reading comprehension.

Research indicates that the explicit teaching of comprehending strategies such as paraphrasing to students will lead to an increase in reading comprehension. Research also supports the notion that these strategies can be taught and used successfully by students as early as Year 2.

In this study a specific three step process was taught to the students to help them remember this strategy:

- 1) Read a sentence
- 2) Change as many words as you can while keeping the meaning the same
- 3) Say the sentence again in your own words

The study compared the results of two groups of students: a Teaching Group who was taught to use synonyms and to paraphrase texts and a Control Group.

The results indicated support for the hypothesis of this study. The Teaching Group showed improvement in the use of synonyms and in their ability to paraphrase at a greater level than the students in the Control Group. Improvement in the comprehension Read and Retell task also indicated a greater level of improvement by the students in the Teaching Group.

The results of this study suggest that explicitly teaching paraphrasing as one of many comprehending strategies while reading, can assist students to improve in their reading comprehension.

Through the teaching of a specific strategy such as paraphrasing the students were alerted to the need to be actively engaged with a text and to 'think' as they read. Students also began to realize and were able to articulate that competent reading involves 'understanding' the text being read.

Introduction

Hypothesis: Explicitly teaching Year 2 students to paraphrase will improve their reading comprehension.

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines paraphrasing as "the restatement of a text, passage or work giving the meaning in another form". Paraphrasing is not intended to be a word for word translation but rather a genuine rewriting focusing on expressing main ideas in the student's own words.

Over the years it has become increasingly evident that the acquisition of high text levels in reading does not always equate to high levels of comprehension. In fact it is often the case that student's ability to read and decode text is higher than their ability to understand and comprehend the text they are reading. It is not uncommon for many students in Grade 2 and above who are reading at a text level of 28 and above to struggle to understand what they have read.

These readers with high word decoding ability, accuracy and fluency, along with low comprehending skills are focusing on the text at word level and have not acquired the strategies required for comprehending. Improving the use of the paraphrasing strategy while reading enhances sentence level comprehension.

Some children with reading difficulties are not able to use the paraphrasing strategy while reading. There is much research to suggest that paraphrasing is a strategy that can greatly increase one's ability to comprehend a text.

Studies have indicated that paraphrasing has been shown to improve reading comprehension for students who have reading difficulties. Fisk and Hurst (2003) contend that when students are explicitly taught how to paraphrase a text, paraphrasing can strengthen their reading comprehension.

Similarly, Katims and Harris (1997) state that the Paraphrasing strategy has been demonstrated to significantly increase the reading comprehension of students both with and without learning difficulties. Further, Fisk and Hurst (2003 pg 84) state that "Paraphrasing for comprehension is an effective reading strategy that helps students process and comprehend what they are reading and learning."

Parker, Hasbrouck, Denton (2002) noted that students demonstrate poor comprehension for several reason. Some of these reasons include the failure to understand key words and sentences and the failure to understand how sentences relate to one another. If teachers are to effectively support the reading development of students it is important to understand the process of reading and how skills are developed if they are to develop efficient methods of teaching reading.

The Multiple levels of Text Processing (MLOTP) Model (Munro 2002) describes reading as operating at five levels of text processing. Information from all these levels contributes to a reader's literacy knowledge and all are used simultaneously to enable the reader to understand what is being read. Students may display processing difficulties at one or more of these levels (Munro 2007), which would impact on their ability to successfully engage in an accurate, fluent and meaningful way.

Munro (2007) contends that we can help improve comprehension by helping the learner to link ideas and that various 'actions' can be taught to students which they can use to link the ideas in a text. Paraphrasing is one of these comprehending 'actions'. When taught explicitly and students use it to intentionally aid reading, comprehension improves.

Research suggests that children's understanding of text can be improved by the explicit teaching of those comprehending strategies that are used implicitly by skilled readers. (Parker & Hurry, 2007)

A number of studies state that to improve the comprehension abilities of struggling readers teachers must actively teach reading comprehending strategies using explicit instruction. (Pressley, 2000; Casteel, 2000; Lee, 2003; Katim and Harris, 1997.)

Furthermore, Pressley (2000) suggests that teachers can begin to teach these strategies as early as Year 2. He believes that comprehension strategy instruction should be an ongoing part of classroom instruction and practice. Teachers need to emphasise that good readers use strategies regularly. "Students at a much younger age than we recognized even a few years ago can become strategic learners." Pressley (2000, pg 108).

The term 'explicit' found in the hypothesis is another very important aspect of this study. Houtveen and Van De Grift (2007, pg410) contend that "the quality of instruction significantly determines its effectiveness." This is further supported in Munro (2004) where he examined developmental trends in acquiring a particular strategy. Munro cites the work of (Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001; Nelson, Smith & Dodd, 1992), regarding the areas involved in 'Effective Strategy Teaching' – These areas are:

- 1) emphasis on purpose and the importance of the strategy;
- 2) description of the steps in the strategy and the reason for each;
- 3) modeling the use of the strategy;
- 4) providing opportunities for students to describe and practice it;
- 5) regular reviewing of the strategy;
- 6) guided practice;
- 7) teaching the strategies of self- instruction statements and
- 8) monitoring the use of the strategy.

The paraphrasing strategy selected for this study is an adapted version of the RAP strategy as cited in Katims & Harris (1997) as cited in (Schumaker, Denton & Deshler, 1984). This strategy targets sentence level processing at a literal meaning level. Students substitute as many words and phrases in the sentence. They then retell the sentence in their own words.

The three steps to be explicitly taught in the teaching of the paraphrasing strategy in this study are:

- 1) Read the sentence
- 2) Change as many words as you can while keeping the meaning the same
- 3) Say the sentence again in your own words.

This modified framework incorporates to some level all eight areas listed above.

In order to improve the student's ability to retell sentences in their own words, the teaching of the paraphrasing strategy was chosen for this study. Another reason the Paraphrasing strategy as a comprehending strategy was chosen for this study is because it has a strong focus on all modes of communication. Fisk and Hurst (2003) write that one of the reasons paraphrasing for comprehension works so well is because it integrates all modes of communication – reading, writing, listening and speaking, which leads to a deeper understanding of the text. (pg 162)

This is particularly important for the students in this study given their diverse language backgrounds – 1st, 2nd and 3rd generation NESB. In addition, given the oral language and life experiences of these students, a strong emphasis on building students' vocabulary repertoire and the teaching of synonyms will need to be incorporated into the teaching of the paraphrasing strategy.

The aim of the present study is to extend research by examining the influence that explicit teaching of paraphrasing has on reading comprehension. The hypothesis for this research project is that explicitly teaching Year 2 students to paraphrase will improve their reading comprehension.

Method

Design

This investigation is a naturalistic study and uses an OXO design to compare the increase in comprehension of Year 2 students through the explicit teaching of the use of synonyms and the paraphrasing strategy to one group and not teaching this strategy to another group.

Participants

Students selected to participate in the study are currently in Year 2, twelve students in total. Six students were part of the intervention group while six students formed the control group.

Of the 12 students, there are 2 sets of twins, 4 recently arrived Sudanese students, 2 students with previous Reading Recovery intervention, 3 are from a 2nd generation non- English speaking background.

The selection of students chosen for the control group and those for the teaching group took into consideration the following in consultation with their classroom teacher:

- knowledge of the students as learners and their prior experiences
- twins were separated
- balance of girls and boys
- prior intervention
- general text level results
- read and retell pre-test results

The group that was originally formed needed to change from the outset due to an extended absence of Student I. Student I was initially in the teaching group but was absent from school for the first week of intervention due to illness, so Student B was taken from the control group and placed in the teaching group. This affected the gender balance, as well as creating an imbalance in the range of abilities represented in each group, which I was trying to achieve.

The students' ages in years and months, NESB, EMA, early intervention and entry reading levels are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Student	Teaching/ Control Group	Age in YEARS	Age in MTHS	NESB	Earlier Interven- tion?	EMA	Pre text level
Teaching Group							
A	T	8yrs 1m	97	N	R R	No	16
B	T	7yrs 4m	88	Y		Yes	28
C	T	7yrs 4m	88	N		No	21
D	T	7yrs 9m	89	Y		Yes	9
E	T	7yrs 4 m	88	N		No	28
F	T	7yrs 11m	95	Y		Yes	8
Control Group							
G	C	7yrs 8m	92	N		No	15
H	C	7yrs 4m	88	N		No	27
I	C	7yrs 2m	86	Y		Yes	27
J	C	7yrs 8m	92	Y		Yes	28
K	C	7yrs 10m	94	Y		Yes	6
L	C	7yrs 11m	95	Y	R R	Yes	9

The range of abilities in both the teaching and control groups was great. However, for all students, comprehension of text, apart from Students J and I, was quite low. Although many of the students were able to decode reasonably accurately, they found it difficult to understand the text read, ie they were not always able to retell or recall many of the events or important information in their reading.

Oral language and vocabulary repertoire development is a significant factor for these students. All students in both groups require much support in relation to the functions and structures of the English language.

Materials

Pre and Post Tests

Materials used in this study included:

* The Reading Progress Test (RPT). The Reading Progress Tests are made up of three types of comprehension questions:

- identifying the meaning of individual words
- selecting the right answer from a number of choices after reading a text
- choosing or supplying missing words in a short text

- * Paraphrasing Test (adapted from Munro 2005)
Only 11 sentences were used for the test.
- * Synonym Test (adapted from Munro 2005)
Format and scoring remained the same but some words were replaced.
- * Read and Re-Tell Passages
See Appendix 1. Although the passages were different, a Fry's Readability Procedure was completed on both texts to ensure the readability levels were the same.

Procedure

All pre-tests and post tests were administered as a whole group of 12 students. Students were withdrawn from their classroom and worked in the library.

- * The teacher administered the paraphrasing test orally. Four practice sentences were completed where students shared their responses. For all other sentences the teacher read the sentences to the students.
- * The Synonym Test was also administered orally by the teacher with 4 practice words. The test words were read to the students.
- * The administration of the Read and Retell texts involved a single reading of the text by the teacher to the group. Students were then instructed to read the text twice prior to their written retell.
- * Given the chronological age of the students in both groups ranged between 7yrs2mths and 8yrs1mth, RPT 2 was used for the pre-test. This test proved to be extremely difficult for the majority of the students. Therefore, all students were retested using RPT 1.

The intervention program involved: 10 x 40 minute sessions, (See Appendix 2 for an outline of the lessons), conducted over a three week period, generally during the literacy block in the mornings.

Given the students' need to develop their vocabulary repertoire and oral language, work on synonyms became an important component of most sessions. (This was not originally planned for, but emerged, as a high need.) Each session began with a review of the previous session, shared reading of the text, where students read along together, this was followed by paraphrasing of sentences as a group in the early sessions, then later in pairs and individually.

The paraphrasing strategy selected for this study is an adapted version of the RAP strategy as cited in Katims & Harris (1997) as cited in (Schumaker, Denton & Deshler, 1984). The strategy was introduced in session one and the teacher modeled paraphrasing. See Appendix 3.

The following steps were written on a poster to support students in knowing what to do when paraphrasing:

- 1) Read a sentence
- 2) Change as many words as you can while keeping the meaning the same.
- 3) Say the sentence again in your own words

Students in the control group remained with their classroom teacher and participated in their regular literacy program.

Post-tests were administered using the same material and procedures as used in the pre-testing period.

Results

Observations of the group

The results of this study indicate support for the hypothesis that explicitly teaching Year 2 students to paraphrase will lead to an increase in reading comprehension. It is important to note that many variables, that we had no control over, can affect a study such as this current study. The following variables may have affected this study and need to be considered in the discussion and analysis of the results.

- The administrator of the test was the principal and not the students' classroom teacher. All the children were excited about being a part of the project and working with the 'principal'. I explained very clearly what I was doing and that I would make sure no child missed out on the learning, as I would run some sessions with the whole class after the study. I would also work with their classroom teacher in planning further sessions and building on the work done.
- Although I endeavoured to teach most lessons in the mornings, this needed to be changed on three occasions as a result of other 'whole school' events or my 'principal' commitments.
- Balanced groups, in terms of gender, ability and backgrounds were created but due to one child's extended illness this changed from the outset.
- Absenteeism was a variable. Student A was absent for two sessions and late for a further two sessions.
- Experiential knowledge was a major factor for the group as up to 8 students has very limited experiences outside school and family gatherings, eg 'visiting their cousins'. Four of these students have been in Australia for 2-4 years only.
- Concentration ability, even in a small group situation, was a difficulty for Students A, C, D and F.

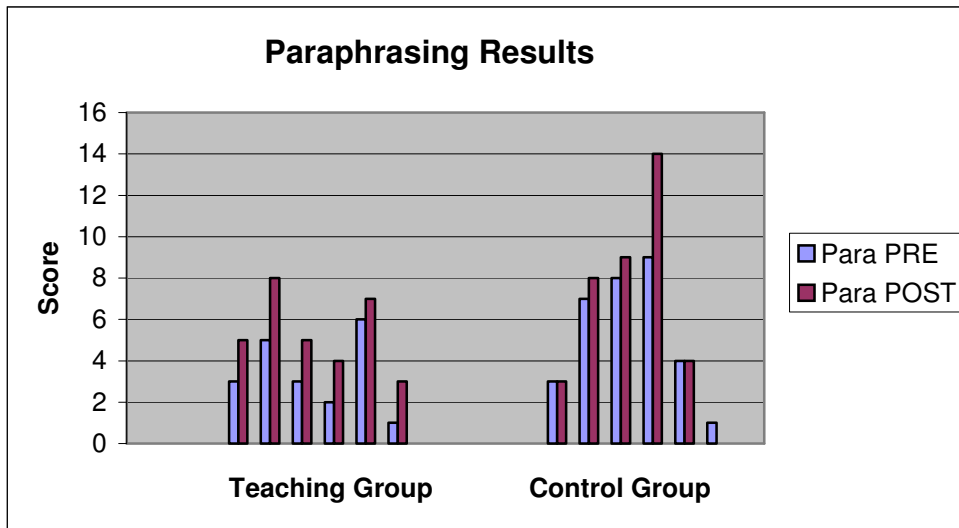
Pre and Post Test Results

Student	Teaching /Control Group	Age in YEARS	Age in MTHS	NESB	Early Intervention	EMA	Pre text level	Post text level	Para PRE	Para POST	Syn - PRE	Syn- POST	Read & Retell Pre	Read & Retell Post	RPT Pre Raw	RPT Post Raw
Teaching Group																
A	T	8y 1m	97	N	R R	No	16	18	3	5	1	5	0	4	8	13
B	T	7y 4m	88	Y		Yes	28	28	5	8	9	17	1	5	20	22
C	T	7y 4m	88	N		No	21	21	3	5	12	14	0	4	6	17
D	T	7y 9m	89	Y		Yes	9	12	2	4	4	9	2	5	1	3
E	T	7y 4 m	88	N		No	28	28	6	7	11	20	6	7	21	21
F	T	7y 11m	95	Y		Yes	8	10	1	3	4	4	2	1	7	11
			Ave	Score			18.3	19.5	3.33	5.33	6.83	11.5	1.83	4.33	10.5	14.5
				Diff				1.2		2		4.67		2.5		4
Control Group																
G	C	7y 8m	92	N		No	15	16	3	3	11	10	1	2	8	12
H	C	7y 4m	88	N		No	27	28	7	8	13	13	5	7	19	23
I	C	7y 2m	86	Y		Yes	27	28	8	9	15	16	7	7	22	26
J	C	7y 8m	92	Y		Yes	28	28	9	14	14	20	9	7	27	26
K	C	7y 10m	94	Y		Yes	6	7	4	4	2	2	2	2	9	10
L	C	7y 11m	95	Y	R R	Yes	9	15	1	0	1	2	1	1	3	5
			Avg	Score			18.7	20.3	5.33	6.33	9.33	10.5	4.17	4.33	14.7	17
				Diff				1.6		1		1.17		.16		2.3

Paraphrasing Pre and Post Test Results

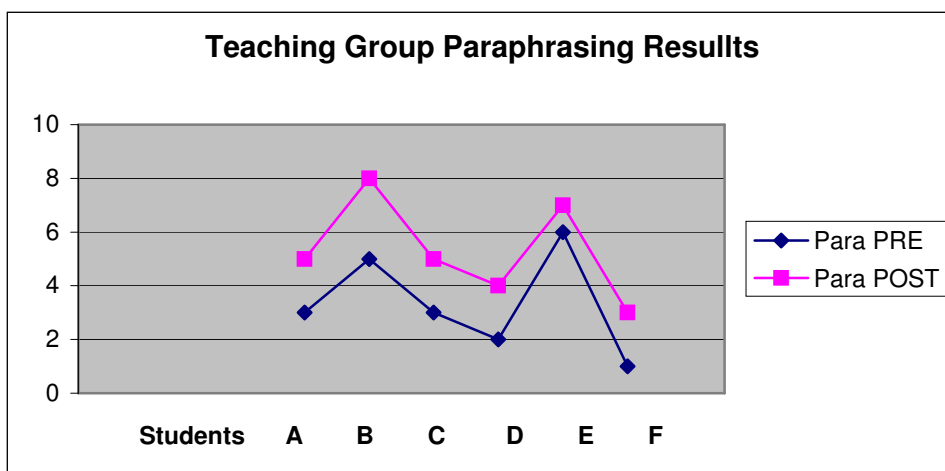
Group Results – Paraphrasing

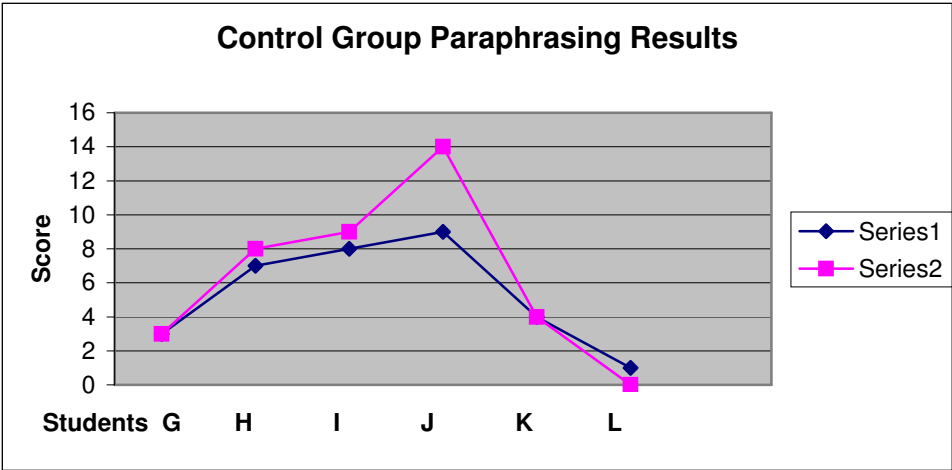
Average scores; Pre - 3.33 and Post - 5.33, indicate that as a group a 2 point average gain was achieved in paraphrasing ability by the teaching group compared with the Control group which showed an average improvement of one point, Pre Test Score - 5.33, Post Test Score – 6.33.



Individual Results - Paraphrasing

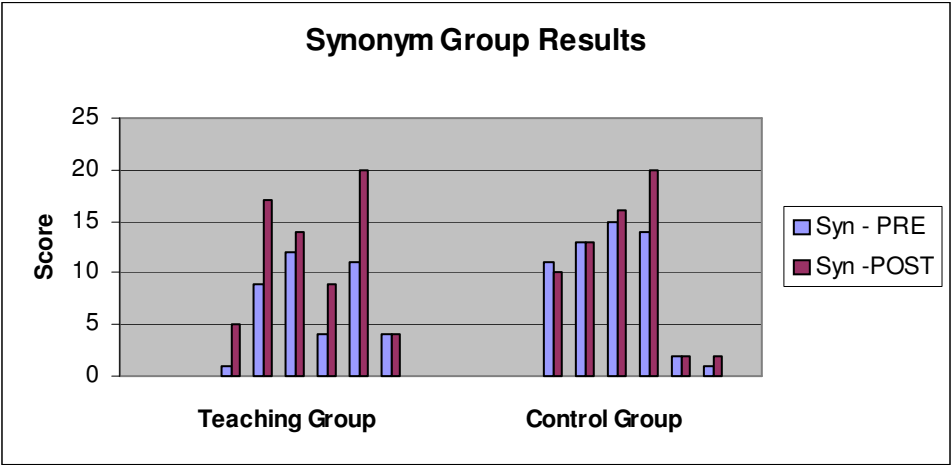
The greatest % rise in improvement was by a high achieving student in the control group, Student J. This I believe is a great indicator that high achieving students usually need only to be told or have modeled a particular skill and it will be mastered relatively quickly. In contrast, students with learning difficulties or lower achievers require frequent practice in the area being taught. This was most evident in students A, D and F's improvement of 2 points each. At the beginning of the program these students basically repeated a sentence they read. Students B and C also improved in paraphrasing ability by 3 and 2 points respectively. They also found it extremely difficult to paraphrase in early sessions and would often 'add' extra information, changing the meaning of the sentence.





Synonym - Group Results

Synonym knowledge improvement was greatest for the teaching group. However it is important to note that the level of synonym knowledge was greater for the control group as a whole at the pre testing stage but the % of improvement at post testing was less than that for the teaching group. The control group showed a 1.17 average point improvement while the teaching group showed a significant 4.67 average point improvement.



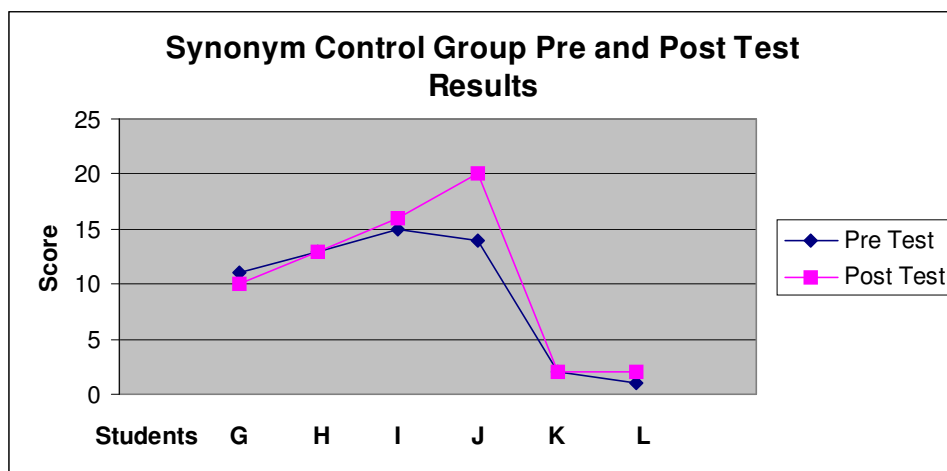
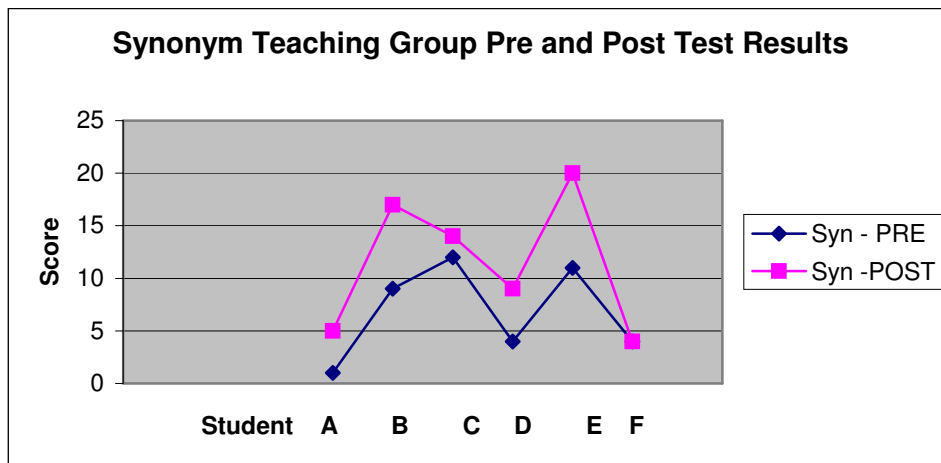
Synonyms -Individual Results

Every child improved in the teaching group except Student F, who remained on the same score. This was surprising as Student F performed very well as the sessions progressed and scored well in mini-tests and games. Student F also used synonyms taught in paraphrasing work very effectively. I believe that Student F's results may have been affected by a number of variables on the post – testing day. Student F seemed less focused than usual, more tired than usual and was reluctant to even have-a-go.

Results for Students B and E reflected their learning ability, (they are generally able to learn new things quite quickly). The ultimate test now will be to see if this new learning is transferred into comprehending future texts!

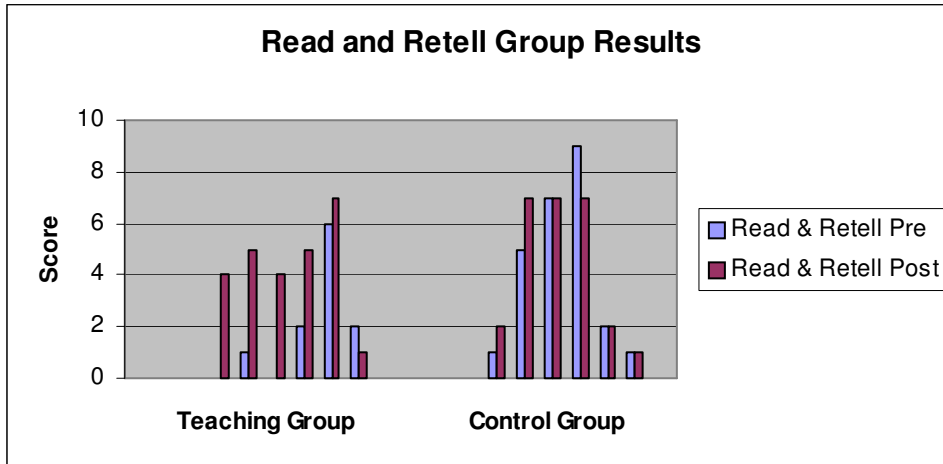
Student A found it difficult to provide any synonyms at the beginning of the study. He would generally offer 'comparatives and superlatives' eg for 'big' Student A would offer 'bigger' and 'biggest'. This transferred to his attempts at paraphrasing. In later sessions Student A showed an understanding of the meaning of synonyms and would offer words like 'large' and 'huge'.

Student D showed a 5 point improvement in synonym knowledge and was perhaps the most enthusiastic member of the group. Her vocab repertoire was very limited due to her cultural background, but once Student D learnt the meaning of the original word, she was either able to think of other words or remembered words used by others in the group. She was also able to transfer this knowledge to our work on paraphrasing.



Read and Retell – Group Results

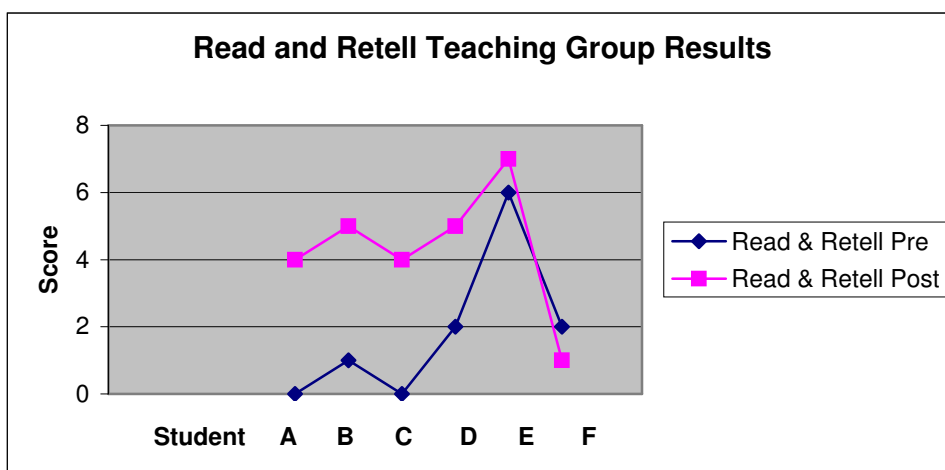
The greatest percentage increase was evident in the Read and Retell Teaching Group Scores. Both groups actually showed an improvement, however, the control group showed a .16 average point improvement while the Teaching Group showed a 2.5 average point increase in reading comprehension of these texts.

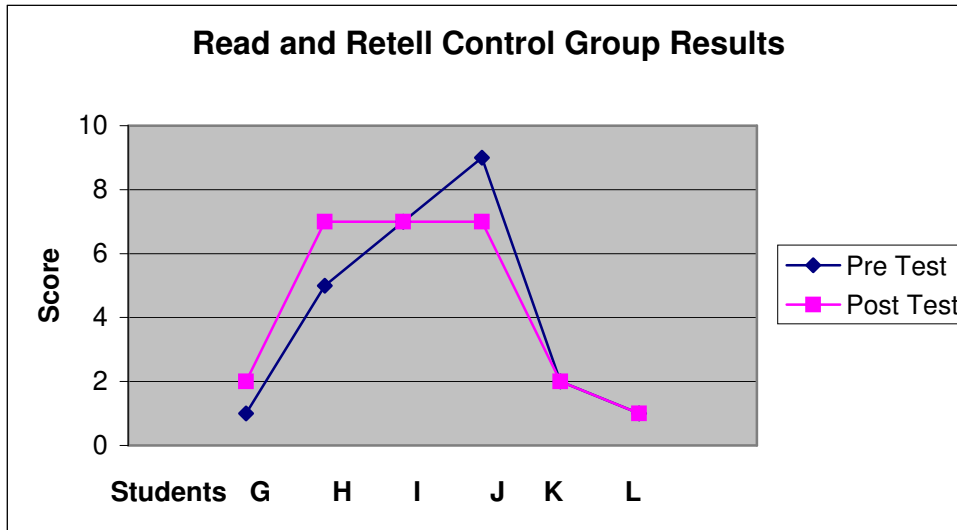


Read and Retell - Individual Results

Students A, B, C, and D showed marked improvement while Student F showed a decrease. This, as for his synonym test results, is surprising as Student F participated actively, enthusiastically and very often, accurately during the retelling section of each session. The reasons for this may be the same as outlined for Student F in explaining his post test results for synonyms, as the test was held on the same day. In addition, I believe that it would be important to do some further testing work with Student F to identify other difficulties he may have. Future tests may include:

- 1) Testing RAN – his ability to recall and name items rapidly and automatically.
- 2) Testing knowledge of onset and rime to determine the rimes he knows and are automatic, and those he needs to learn.
- 3) Testing his verbal short term memory – he may retrieve verbal information from his long term memory more slowly.





Read Progress Test (RPT) Results

The RPT results, I believe, did not accurately reflect the reading comprehension ability of this group of 12 students. RPT 2 proved extremely difficult for this cohort of Grade 2 students at this stage. RPT 1 also proved difficult and upon reflection an inappropriate testing tool for this cohort.

Analysis of the results using the ‘Australian Norms Supplement’ showed very low achievement results as a group.

Possible causes for the low achievement could include:

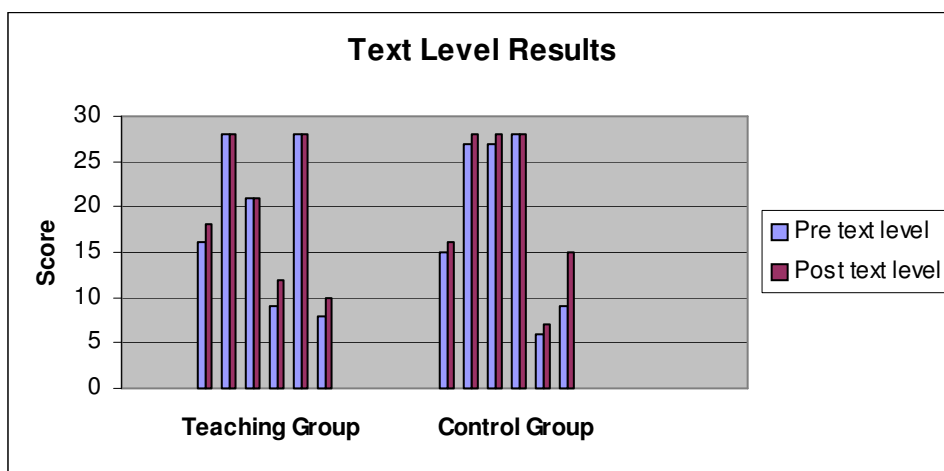
- * This type of test has never been a part of these students experience.
- * Some of these students have significant difficulties in reading and comprehension at both word and sentence levels.
- * The content (including vocabulary and text topics) in the test, was quite foreign and not part of experiences many of the students may have had.

I also believe that the students ‘guessed’ answers for multiple-choice questions and they may have ‘copied’ others’ answers, giving them correct answers but certainly not understanding what they have read.

The teaching group showed a greater improvement in raw scores from pre to post tests, than the control group, but due to all of the above, I don’t believe that the results in this instance, either Pre or Post RPT Results, accurately represented the ability of the students and therefore were not included in the analysis of results for this study.

Text Level Results

Text level results indicate a greater improvement for the control group with a 1.6 average point increase, compared to the teaching group who achieved a 1.2 average point increase in text levels. The greatest increase occurred for Student L in the control group, who had an increase of 6 levels. This is compared with the greatest increase in the teaching group of 3 levels achieved by Student D. It is important to note however that Student L is currently on Reading Recovery and has been on the program for 19 weeks. The Reading Recovery student in the teaching group, Student A, came off the program 12 months ago. Also, it is important to note that reading comprehension is not a feature of these leveled text tests and therefore may not be useful as the other measures in this study in determining the improvement in reading comprehension of these students.



Group Trends

Post test results for Paraphrasing, Synonyms and Read and Retell all show general improvement for the teaching group, and therefore appears to support the prediction of this study, that explicit teaching of the paraphrasing strategy leads to an increase in reading comprehension. However, I believe further testing needs to occur to ascertain the level to which reading comprehension has been increased. Also, future monitoring needs to occur to determine the level of transference of the paraphrasing strategy into the repertoire of strategies used by the students and its continued effect on the students' reading comprehension.

Discussion

The focus of this study was to explicitly teach year 2 students to paraphrase and to examine its effects on reading comprehension. The results of this study support the hypothesis, and also further supports research, which suggests that teaching strategies, such as paraphrasing when reading, improves students' reading comprehension.

Students in this study improved in the use of synonyms and paraphrasing and demonstrated some improvement in reading comprehension. Although significant gains may not be evident in this study as Katims & Harris (1997) suggest may be possible, the trends indicated in the results are positive. However, more significant change may have occurred if the intervention took place over a longer period of time.

The control group, three of who were fluent, confident readers and I believe were able to use these strategies implicitly or through just modeling, made gains. This lends support to Parker & Hurry's (2007) research that suggests that skilled readers are able to use many strategies implicitly while children with learning difficulties need explicit teaching of comprehending strategies.

This study also supported Pressley's (2000) suggestion that teachers can begin to teach comprehending strategies as early as Year 2 and that it is important to emphasise that good readers use strategies regularly.

Parker et al (2002) noted that failure to understand key words is a factor in poor reading comprehension. This was very evident in this study. The study was adapted as it progressed through the teaching sequence to ensure work on synonyms and vocabulary development was incorporated. Often the students' lack of synonym and vocabulary knowledge would prevent them from describing what was happening in a text. Reading comprehension directly correlates with vocabulary knowledge ie. children achieve much better comprehension results if their vocabulary is broader. (Munro 2007). However, the use of synonyms in students' oral work did not always transfer to their written tasks. For instance, Student F's post test synonym results did not reflect the range of synonym knowledge he had developed while working in, particularly, the later sessions.

In addition, post test results did not totally reflect the gains made by students A and D. During the early teaching sessions these students were basically repeating the sentence read, adding on extra information or increasing the 'value' of words, eg big – bigger, house – every house, rather than using synonyms while stating the sentence in their own words. By later sessions these students were offering a variety of synonyms for words.

The fact that paraphrasing integrates all modes of communication, reading, writing, speaking and listening, as outlined in Fisk & Hurst (2003) as being a feature of paraphrasing, made this a most appropriate strategy for these students. The oral language needs of these students are great and I found the process of teaching paraphrasing supportive in vocabulary knowledge and addressing topic knowledge.

Selection of text is a most important factor in a study such as this, and would be important to consider carefully if repeating this study, or even continuing teaching these students. The text chosen in session 5, “The Fisherman and His Wife”, although of high interest, proved too difficult, as it contained many unknown content words that were not part of the students’ prior experience.

During the course of the 10 sessions taught, the importance of maintaining meaning and the need to ‘think’ as they were reading was frequently reinforced. At the end of session 10, I asked the students in the intervention group, to tell me one main thing that they learnt during our time together. These were their responses:

- Student A – ‘We learnt not to copy a sentence but to put it in our own words.’
- Student B – ‘We learnt paraphrasing so it can help our brain think better.’
- Student C – ‘We learnt about synonyms, which are words that mean the same.’
- Student D – ‘Paraphrasing shows that you are thinking.’
- Student E – ‘We learnt that paraphrasing helps us to understand what we read.’
- Student F – ‘Synonyms mean the same thing.’

In relation to teaching practice, the greatest thing I changed by implementing this study was the amount of ‘practice’ I gave the students throughout the course of all the sessions in the explicit teaching of paraphrasing. I believe that sustained practice of a particular strategy can lead to an increase in reading comprehension. This intervention of practice and explicit teaching is referred to as the independent variable in a study such as this. The student’s response is termed the dependent variable. In this case, the student’s outcome, an increase in reading comprehension, is the dependent variable.

It is interesting to note the change in confidence that was demonstrated by the students as a result of this practice. In early sessions Students B,D and F needed much encouragement to have-a-go. They found paraphrasing very challenging. This gradually changed during the course of the sessions. By the end of the study these students demonstrated much higher levels of enthusiasm and confidence in attempting to paraphrase. Their oral work certainly reflected the increased confidence and positive approach to the tasks in each session.

Learning to read is enhanced by active engagement and interaction with a text. It was great to hear an example of this during session 8 of this study, when Student E said to Student A as he read his written paraphrase, “Let’s re-read the sentence to see if it makes sense.” The verbalizing and articulation of strategies students are using, I believe is a vital aspect of learning these strategies.

The teaching of a particular strategy must be ‘explicit’. But teachers must not only be explicit about the strategy being taught, but also about the ‘purpose’ for the strategy. Teachers need to continually refer students back to ‘why’ they are learning this strategy. Most importantly however, it is not enough to only model the strategy but to ensure that all students are given many opportunities to practice the strategy and also to ‘describe’ what they are doing. Teachers need to re-visit the strategy and its purpose often!

Three areas that I feel would be interesting to investigate further would be the impact of the explicit teaching of the skill of visualizing, as I believe this would greatly support students while paraphrasing. Also, I believe that the self-efficacy of my intervention group increased throughout the course of our sessions, but I only have anecdotal evidence to support this belief. A study to see whether the explicit teaching of a strategy and the subsequent gains in ability leads to increased self-efficacy within an action research project could be worthwhile. Another future study could look at the effect of ‘verbalising’ before, during and after reading by explicitly teaching students to use this strategy to describe what they are doing throughout the reading process.

Implications for the school and teaching practice

This Action Research Project (ARP) while very worthwhile was difficult to undertake as a principal, given the range of demands placed on the principal’s role in relation to commitments both at school and out of school. However, perhaps one of the best outcomes of this study is the fact that it has greatly increased my capacity in relation to knowledge and skills in the area of literacy intervention.

Having participated in this ARP, I strongly believe I have an obligation to ensure that my acquired knowledge and results of the ARP inform practice in my school. I need to be strategic in how I share this knowledge and information so it can ultimately lead to increased teacher knowledge, which in turn will lead to a change in pedagogy. Some of the ways I have already begun to do this includes:

- After informal ‘sharing’ sessions, the Literacy Co-ordinator, who hasn’t completed the course, has incorporated many strategies into planning and teaching sessions with other teachers.
- Literacy PLT Meetings now include a more focused section on Professional Development through the provision of current research to read and discuss as a staff. Some great discussions have occurred during these sessions and this in turn has impacted, and is continuing to impact, on classroom practice.
- The practice of providing professional reading at Literacy PLT Meetings has now also moved to other curriculum PLT meetings ie. Numeracy, Wellbeing and Inquiry. This is proving to a most beneficial component of PLT meetings and is greatly increasing the professional development opportunities for our teachers.

Change is more likely when there is a whole school approach to an area. My abilities as an instructional leader have developed as a result of this course. I feel I have been able to impact on the delivery of our literacy program across the school in a very practical, instructional way by participating in this study. Sharing my area of study, providing details of the results, working closely with key personnel (literacy co-ordinator) and making available time at meetings to discuss current research, were all instrumental in making some changes to teaching and learning practices by some teachers.

I would like to suggest that it may be very beneficial to include in this unit a component that is developed inviting *all* principals of students undertaking the unit, to participate in a day or a half day session, with the students. At this session a variety of topics could be discussed, eg. 'instructional leadership', the need for a whole school approach, the importance of setting up structures to promote and support the professional development of teachers. I believe that a model of information delivery such as this, ie with principal and student, can impact on future change in a school in a greater way, which I believe is the ultimate challenge of a course such as this.

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RESOURCES

Stimulus Pictures

Synonym Flashcards / Games

Fox, M. (1986). *A Bedtime Story*. Bookshelf Publishing Australia

Ling, L. (1995). *Snake!* Sunshine Books.

O'Toole, M. (1987). *Stone Soup*. McMillan Company of Australia.

Chilwell, J. (2002). *The Fisherman and His Wife*. Mimosa Publications

John Munro Notes 2007

John Munro Paraphrasing Test 2005

John Munro Synonym Test 2005

Appendix 1

STONE SOUP

Name: _____

It was a cold, wet night.

The wind was blowing a gale.


An old man was walking slowly along the road.

He was wet, cold, tired and hungry.

He had walked a very long way.

Suddenly, he came upon a house.

So he went up and knocked on the door.

A large empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to write their response to the story.

Name: _____

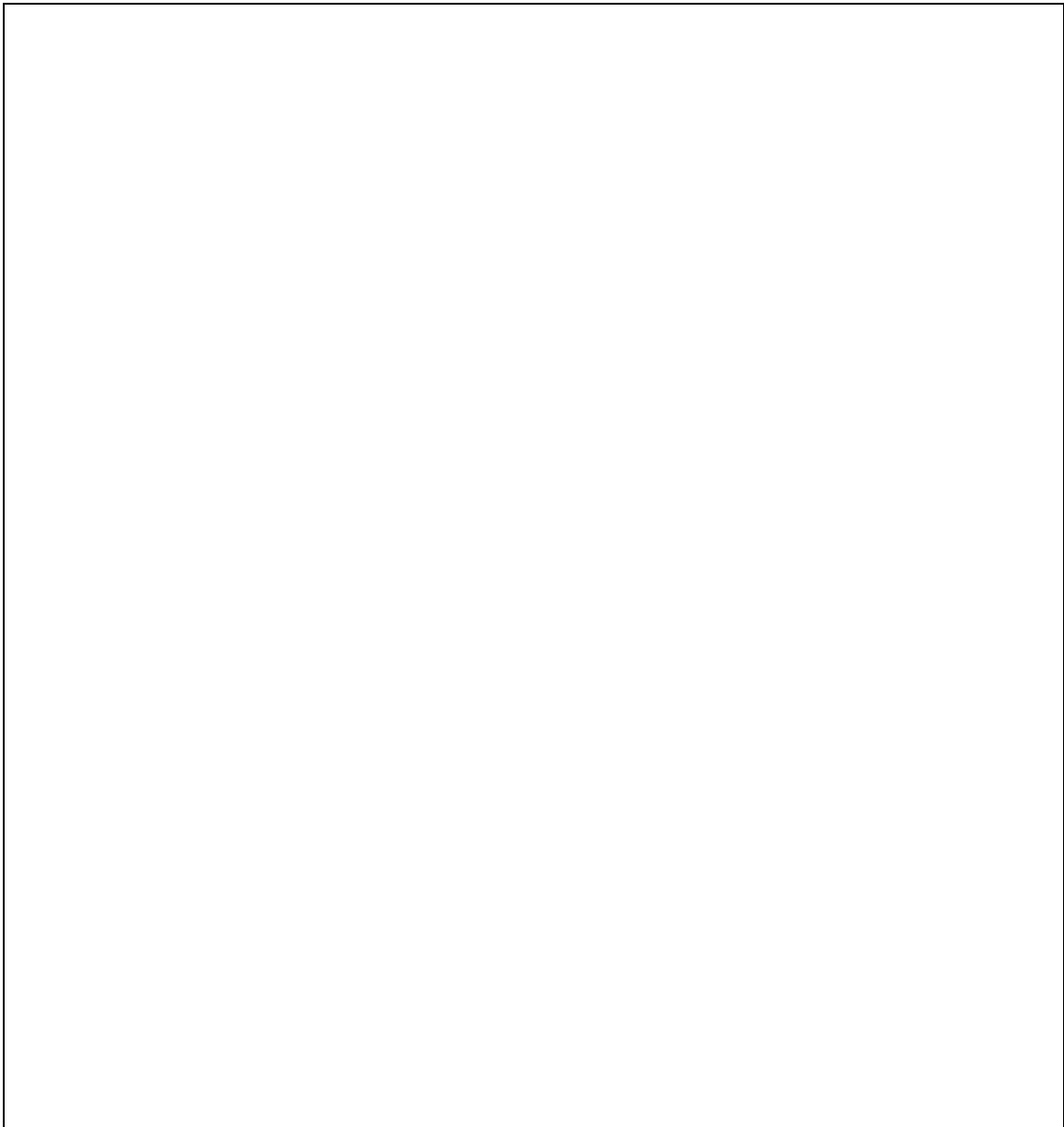
A cook opened the door.

The old man asked the cook if she would give him some food.

But the cook told him that she had none.

“May I come in and dry myself by the fire, then?”
asked the old man.

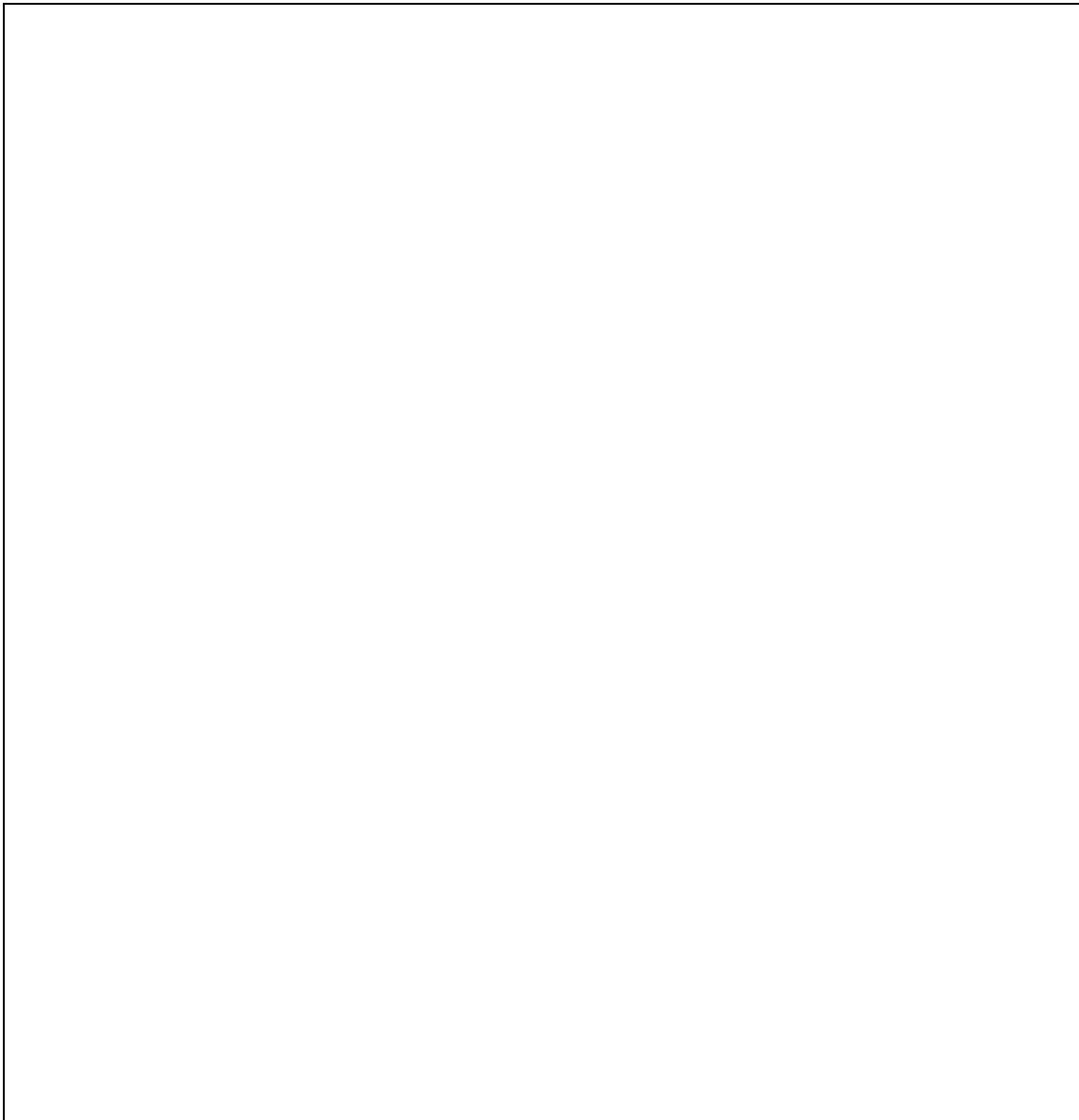
“All right,” said the cook, “but you mustn’t get in my way.”



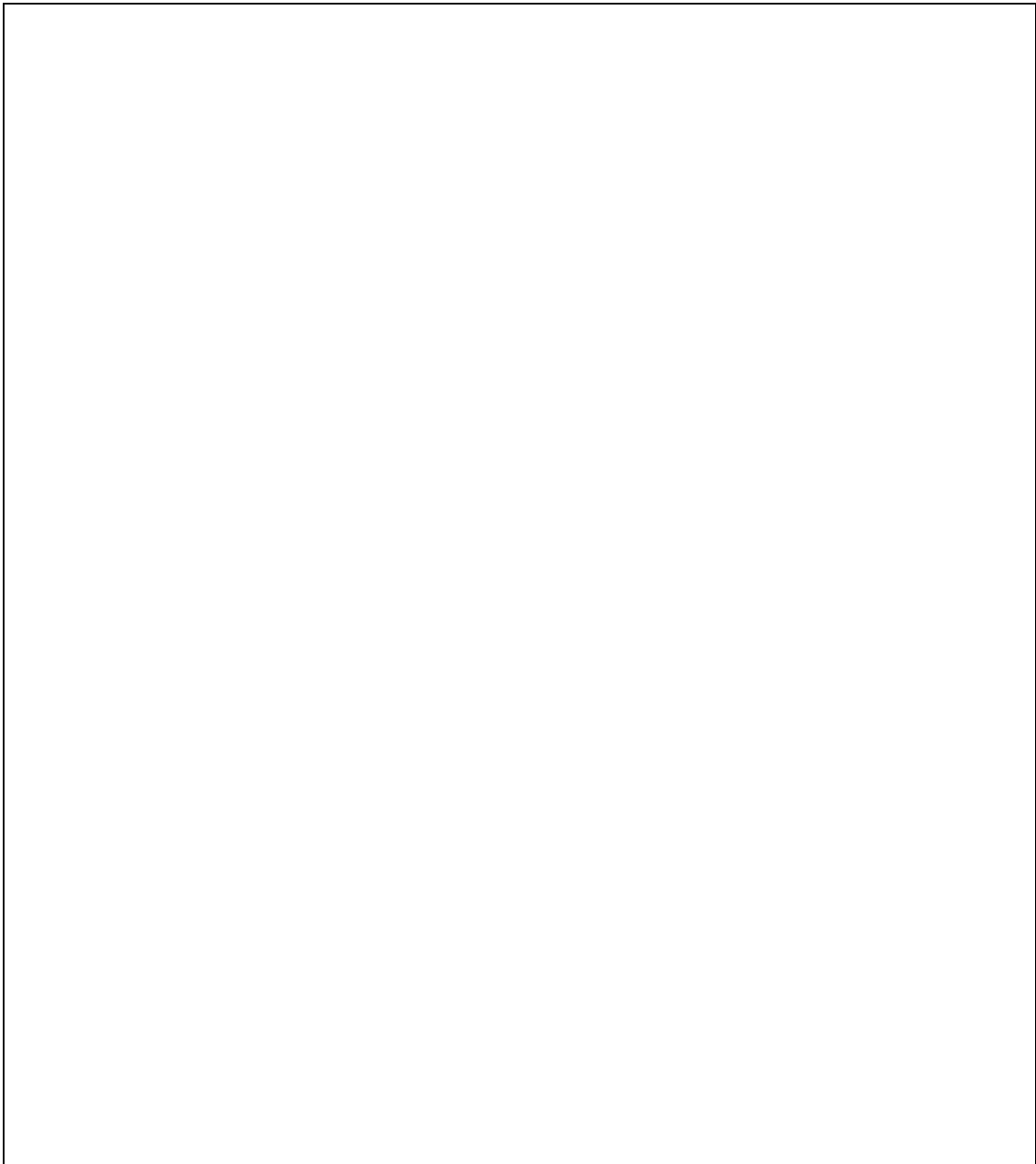
SNAKE

Name: _____

Ali was in the garden when, suddenly, something moved beside him. He looked down. Something stared at him with cold eyes. Something long and slithery. It was a snake!



Ali froze with fear. The snake stared at him for what seemed like for ever. Then it slid into the bushes. There was a rustling noise. Then there was a loud squawk. The snake must have caught a bird!



Appendix 2

LESSON PLANS

Lessons were based on J. Munro's Paraphrasing Lesson Plans 2006 with adaptations. As mentioned earlier knowledge of synonyms is necessary in the process of paraphrasing. Initially it was anticipated that 1-2 lessons would focus on synonyms to support students in their paraphrasing attempts. As the sessions progressed it became evident that a greater amount of work needed to be done with synonyms particularly for students from a non-English speaking background especially for our recently arrived refugee students. These adaptations are reflected in the following lesson plans.

LESSON 1

Procedure

Picture chat (garden scene with children playing). Children brainstorm words related to the picture – describing words, feelings.

- List on chart
- Teacher explains word 'synonym'
- Children give synonyms for selected words on chart.
- Children asked to provide a sentence about picture – write on chart.
- Other children asked to read the sentence and then change it using a synonym for one or more words.
- Share.
- Write words on cards.

LESSON 2

Story – 'A Bedtime Story'

- Revise Lesson one's Picture Chat work.
- Revise meaning of a synonym
- Use stimulus pictures - Children provide synonyms for:
happy, angry, big, nice
- Use feeling words in sentences
- Substitute words with a synonym
- Ask – Does it make sense?
Does it still mean the same thing?
- Introduce 'paraphrasing' – explain
Paraphrasing is saying in your own words what you have just read.
You read it to yourself
You have a go at saying it another way, changing as many words as you can.
You need to keep the same meaning
- Model paraphrasing
- Read sentence then paraphrase
Children try to paraphrase orally (teacher scribes)
- Introduce 'Concentration' Game using synonyms

LESSON 3

- Text re-tell – ask children to re-tell the story that was read in Lesson 2.
- Review synonyms
- Text is re-read.
- Ask children to paraphrase sentences as they are read.
- List key content words from the above re-read
- Children suggest synonyms
- List
- New text – shared reading of further pages in ‘Rosie’s Pet Rabbit’.
- Review meaning of paraphrasing.
- **Ask students to state what they are going to do when they are paraphrasing.**
- Practice paraphrasing sentence by sentence.
- Write on chart some of the student’s responses – read and discuss for retention of meaning, use of synonyms.

Game : ‘Baseball Synonyms’
 Teacher ‘bats’ a word
 Batters try to ‘hit’ it with a synonym (there are 3 batters per word)

LESSON 4

- Text re-tell from Lesson 3.
- Revise synonyms used in two previous lessons.
- Complete reading ‘A Bedtime Story’
- Model paraphrasing
- Identify key words
- Children suggest synonyms
- Teacher model of paraphrasing say:
“I will read a sentence, then try to say it in my own words. I will try to change as many words as I can”.
- Complete above for 2-4 sentences.
- Ask children to tell you the steps of paraphrasing.

Paraphrasing

- * Read a sentence
- * Change as many words as you can while keeping the same meaning.
- * Say the sentence again in your own words.

(write on chart, see Appendix 6)

- Students paraphrase one sentence at a time
- Game – ‘Concentration’

LESSON 5

- Review meaning and steps in paraphrasing – refer to chart
- Children re-tell text from Lesson 4.
- Play ‘Synonym Baseball’ to revise words from Lesson 4 text.
- Shared reading of new text “The Fisherman and His Wife”.
- Teacher models paraphrasing
- Ask children to paraphrase
- Identify key content words (write on cards)
- List synonyms (write on card)
- Read further
- Ask children to paraphrase – **ask students to say what they are going to do before paraphrasing. i.e. state the strategy** – “I will read the sentence, then change as many words as I can
- Children read sentences and paraphrase.

Assessment (Individually)

Use ten words – written on cards.

Ask children to name a synonym (in 10 seconds)

If correct child keeps card.

Evaluation

All students ‘won’ between 7-9 cards. The words used were familiar to the students are used regularly in the first 5 sessions.

LESSON 6

- Children re-tell text so far in own words.
- Revise synonyms from previous lesson.
Use synonyms to replace words in text.
- Look at synonyms to be used in new section of text. (Look at phrases or groups of words they may replace a word or phrase
e.g (.....*was very, very, very angry*.....may replace*flew into a terrible rage*)
- Shared reading of new section of text. Pg 2-5
- Cued paraphrasing – students verbalise the paraphrasing strategy ie they state what they are going to do.
- At the end of each sentence or 2-3 sentences children re-tell in their own words.
- In pairs children write a sentence paraphrasing 1-3 sentences.
- Share and discuss.

LESSON 7

- Children re-tell yesterday's text.
- Shared reading of new text. Pg 6-7
- Children to state what they need to do when paraphrasing.
- Read 1 – 3 sentences and paraphrase.
- In pairs children write a sentence paraphrasing 1 – 3 sentences.
- Share.
- Synonyms Game - "Memory"

LESSON 8 / 9

- Re-tell text read in Lesson 7
- Shared Reading of Pages 8-13
- Identify key words and brainstorm synonyms for these.
- Review Paraphrasing steps.
- Children state what they need to do when paraphrasing.
- In pairs children write a paraphrase for 1-3 sentences.

Lesson 9 – Children write individual paraphrases for sentences.

- Share.
- Game – "Synonym Baseball"

LESSON 10

- Retell text read in lesson 9
- Shared reading pg 16-17
- Identify key words.
- Brainstorm synonyms.
- Review paraphrasing strategy - Children state what they need to do when paraphrasing.
- Individually paraphrase sentences.
- Share with the group
- Students are asked to state what they believe is one of the main things they have learnt in all our sessions together. (Responses recorded in discussion section of this paper)

Paraphrasing

1) Read a sentence

2) Change as many words as you can while keeping the meaning the same

3) Say the sentence again in your own words