Increasing vocabulary knowledge of students from an E.S.L. background, experiencing difficulty with oral language, will improve their listening comprehension

Abstract

Many students, in their first few years of schooling, and some beyond this, encounter difficulties with the types of literacy learning related tasks they are asked to undertake once they start their formal schooling. The reasons for this are varied and often connected to the quality of the students' pre literate experiences.

For the English as a Second Language learner, (a diverse group within this one category) and especially for those whose first language is not the language of the dominant culture at school, there are many missed opportunities to comprehend fully when involved in tasks dependent on their control of the English language. All the facets of language acquisition are built upon a strong oral language foundation. Research has shown that strengthening children's vocabulary knowledge contributes to strengthening their oral language and comprehension.

This study examines whether addressing vocabulary knowledge through the explicit teaching of synonyms whilst reading to Year 1 & 2 students, has an impact on their listening comprehension. 14 E.S.L. students were selected based on similarities in their oral language needs. 7 were placed in a control group and 7 received intervention over a series of 10 lessons. The lessons comprised of building up vocabulary knowledge through the explicit teaching of synonyms, from reading a series of fiction texts followed by a series of non fiction texts.

The results summary indicate that while some small gains were made by the Teaching group in listening comprehension after the intervention, the post test scores were larger than the pre test scores for both groups. The difference between the two groups was not significant.

The findings of the study only partially support my hypothesis. While all children in the Teaching group made some gain in their listening comprehension, so too did all but one student in the Control Group. The implications for future work in this area would be to simplify the study by focussing on one element at a time in terms of teaching explicitly. It would be of further interest to investigate whether Shared Reading texts are better suited to vocabulary building through synonym use. Another avenue of exploration might be whether shorter sessions over a longer period of time, for example 15 or 20 lessons for the intervention would make a greater difference in the long term to the students.

Introduction

Many students, in their first few years of schooling, encounter difficulties with the types of language-learning related tasks they are asked to engage in, once formal schooling becomes a regular part of their lives. The reasons for this may be many and varied; school readiness and gender issues, how well established a first language is in comparison to the second language the student is using at school, and the subsequent difficulties encountered by some students who fit into the diverse categories that exist for those classed as "English as a Second Language" learners.

For many students, the challenges they face in language learning in the school setting may be connected to the variety of reasons that their pre-literate experiences and oral language development, is not all that it could be by the time they start their formal schooling. For these students, therefore, rather than having a solid foundation upon which to build all other language learning, the vast difference between their expressive and receptive language is evident from the time they commence school, and their access to comprehension of spoken and written language is compromised.

Any combination of the above reasons may cause a myriad of difficulties and confusions for many students throughout the school day, and over the course of their years of schooling.

The variety and degrees of difficulties these students face are observed by teachers on a daily basis and are sometimes evidenced in the students'

- inability to retell a familiar story, or experience, coherently and/or sequentially
- frustration, exhibited when not having access to the vocabulary they need to clearly express their intentions
- use of "one or two word" or partial sentence answers to specific questions, and in their conversations with others
- inability to comprehend texts beyond a literal level despite how well they may decode
- limited access to a rich vocabulary with which to make more accurate predictions when reading unfamiliar words in texts

In some cases, a limited experience of the world beyond a combination of the home, multi-media exposure and the school environment, may also contribute to the difficulty some students encounter when trying to engage in meaningful conversations, or trying to connect to events they are reading about in texts at school, which are far removed from their life experience.

A diverse vocabulary plays an important part in learning to read and making the link between what the student reads (or has read to them) and the student's prior knowledge. Access to a rich vocabulary is crucial to their interpretation of an author's intended message. Students who are in their first few years of formal schooling, must eventually make use of the words they hear orally, to make meaning of the words they see in print. Beginning readers are challenged on a daily basis, especially if their first language is not English. They may be still coming to grips with how to manipulate their second language in order to be able to express their intentions to others. They navigate daily to find ways of trying to make written English meaningful to them, and are also called upon to make accurate predictions about words that are not already part of their speaking (oral) vocabulary. Furthermore, when there is a mismatch for E.S.L. students between their prior knowledge and school expectations, the task of making meaning from text becomes increasingly difficult as these students encounter greater numbers of words which are not yet a part of their listening vocabulary. (Carrasquillo, Kucer, and Abrams,2004, cited in Gibbons, 2009).

In reviewing the importance of vocabulary instruction for English learners, Manyak and Bauer (2009) assume and note that vocabulary knowledge for students who do not grow up in English speaking homes limits them, compared to that of monolingual (English only) speakers. They acknowledge several research findings to support this assumption. (Saville-Troike, 1984; Garcia, 1991; Proctor, Carlo, August, & Snow, 2005). In recent research focussing on vocabulary

instruction for English Language learners, Manyak and Bauer (2009) highlight particular successes noted from the findings of
Proctor et al. (2005), that "low-socioeconomic status bilingual Latina/o students are capable of learning English to impressive levels" (p.251); and that Silverman, (2007) finds successful increases in kindergarten English Language (EL) learners' vocabulary acquisition by using a combination of a TEXT TALK- Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002) and adding familiar E.S.L. techniques such as acting out word meanings and visually illustrating them. Furthermore they cite Carlo, et al. (2004) who investigated the effects of teaching 10-12 content target words per week to fifth grade EO's and EL's over a period of 15 weeks involving repeated exposure to the words combined with sound word learning strategies (inferring meanings, using context, morphology and knowledge of cognates).
It was found that both groups made similar gains in word knowledge, word parts and multiple meanings and comprehension.

As word knowledge is essential to how prose is interpreted when students read, or to how they communicate with each other in a verbal or written manner, it follows then to say that they access meaning by their word knowledge. Beck, McKeown and Kucan (2002) suggest that a student's vocabulary should increase by 2,000 – 3,000 words a year. They add that this can be done through indirect instruction (wide reading of a variety of texts, listening to teacher Read Aloud texts (Read To) combined with word meaning discussions, inviting students to be curious about words and collecting them in various ways) and direct instruction (analysing word structure, using context clues, dictionary use, explain meaning of words using knowledge of word parts).
They claim there is a significant gap in students' vocabulary knowledge in direct relation to the amount of time they spend reading within, and outside, of the school day, and that this gap widens as students progress through their schooling. They state "Students who lack adequate vocabulary knowledge have difficulty getting meaning from what they read, so they read less because they find reading difficult." This has serious implications for the E.S.L. learner who is often in a position of not being able to access word meaning.

Love and Reilly (2008) refer to vocabulary knowledge and a "major contributor to Making Meaning."
They add, "A student with a rich understanding of word meanings and an extensive network of word associations and links to other concepts can draw on this underlying knowledge when making sense of reading. As many words in the English language have multiple meanings, good readers must have the flexibility to swap if their first understanding of a word takes them down the wrong track.

In reference to the rapidly growing number of ELL (English Language Learners) in U.S. schools, Kieffer and Nonie explain that the findings of August, Carlo, Dressler & Snow (2005) showed that these learners are likely to lack the English vocabulary knowledge they require to comprehend difficult texts. By the fourth grade most of these students, and those born overseas before starting school, have acquired the most basic form of interpersonal English they need to interact socially with others however continue to lack the academic English vocabulary associated with specific content learning. This mirrors much of what we know about segments of our E.S.L. population in Victorian schools.

The present investigation aims to extend the earlier research by examining the impact of the explicit teaching of synonyms when reading fiction and non-fiction texts aloud to students who are experiencing difficulty with their use of oral language. Furthermore, it aims to see if there is a link to strengthening vocabulary knowledge and meaning for these E.S.L. students, and whether there is a gain in students' retelling abilities.

The hypothesis of this study therefore, is that increasing vocabulary knowledge of students from an E.S.L. background, experiencing difficulty with oral language, will improve their listening comprehension.

Method

Design:

The study uses a case study OXO design, in which the gain in listening comprehension (retell), word vocabulary (synonyms), and text level and word reading accuracy is monitored after explicit teaching of synonyms to a group of Year 1 & 2 E.S.L. students, experiencing oral language difficulties.

Participants:

Initially there were 16 participants in this study, but one student from the intervention group left the school and another from the control group went overseas soon after the completion of the pre testing. Therefore, the current participants are a group of 14 Year 1 & 2 students from across three classes. These students were divided into two groups of 7, in order to have a control group (4 females, 3 males) and an intervention (5 females, 2 males) group.
The control group came from one of the Year 1 & 2 classes, and the intervention group comprised of 7 students from two other Year 1 & 2 classes in the school.
Both groups comprised of 4 students from Yr.1 and 3 students from Yr.2.
The students hail from is a low S.E.S. school in Melbourne, with a significant portion of E.S.L. learners as its clientele.

The definition of E.S.L. students, used by the Catholic Education Office for census collection purposes is "The student or parent/guardian speaks a language other than English at home."
"E.S.L. students are a highly diverse group, including those beginning school at normal starting age (2-6 years) who have had minimal or no exposure to English, born overseas or in Australia."
All of the students in the current study, except one, fall into the above category and all students in the study fit within one or more of the categories below.
"Definition of an ESL student for reporting purposes (guidelines)
- Comes from a language background other than English
- Does not speak English as the main language at home
- Has been enrolled in an Australian school for less than five years
- Is on the ESL continuum"
                                (DEECD & CEO)

Students in the control and intervention groups were selected based on similarities that had been observed regarding their language learning. When analysing the Literacy Pre Test data, concerns were raised about these students' Record of Oral Language scores and Text Levels in tandem with what had been anecdotally noted regarding the difficulties most of these students experience in understanding and/or discussing texts. It is advised that students scoring below 13 in the Record of Oral Language are likely to experience difficulty in understanding all but the simplest of instructions from teachers, and in following a story. Clay, M.M. et al (1983). It is also advised that students scoring between14 and 28, require careful monitoring, as they may have similar needs to those scoring below 13. C.E.O.M. Literacy Education Officers,(2007).
As many of the students in this study were close to, or within this range, it made sense to include them across the control and intervention groups.
Questions also arose about the students' Reading Accuracy, the difficulty they have in understanding texts beyond the literal, and the challenges they face in discussing texts in a sequential or logical manner.
The students range between 73-93 months of age, and at the commencement of data gathering for this study 8 of the students had been at school for 1 year and 2 months, the other 6 having attended for 2 years and 2 months.
Their ages, entry reading abilities and other details referred to above are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Student Profile (general)

Name	Control = 0 Teaching=1	Age in MONTHS	Gender 0=Male 1=Female	Years of Schooling	EMA No=0 Yes=1
A	1	77	1	1y 2m	0
B	1	74	1	1y 2m	1
C	1	76	1	1y 2m	0
D	1	73	0	1y 2m	1
E	1	83	0	2y 2m	1
G	1	83	1	2y 2m	1
H	1	93	1	2y 2m	0
I	0	78	1	1y 2m	1
J	0	81	1	1y 2m	1
K	0	82	0	1y 2m	1
L	0	79	0	1y 2m	1
M	0	89	1	2y 2m	1
O	0	87	0	2y 2m	1
P	0	93	1	2y 2m	1

Table 3: Student Profile data at Entry

Name	Control = 0 Teaching=1	ESL No=0 Yes=1	R.O.L /42	Text level PRE /28	Reading Accuracy % PRE	Earlier Intevention No=0 RR=1 Bridges=2 ERIK=3…
A	1	1	20	9	92	0
B	1	1	22	0	85.5	0
C	1	1	22	10	91	0
D	1	1	14	8	95	0
E	1	1	29	18	90	0
G	1	1	18	13	92	1
H	1	1	18	10	90	1
I	0	1	26	9	96	0
J	0	1	33	11	95	0
K	0	1	26	10	95	0
L	0	1	25	5	93	0
M	0	1	15	11	95	1
O	0	1	28	13	97	1
P	0	1	20	20	94	0

Materials:

Materials used included the following:

- **Running records** Alpha Assess Levels 1–28 CECV Benchmark Kit. (2007) Running records of reading behaviour were taken to determine text levels and reading accuracy of all students in the study, at pre and post intervention.
.
- **Listening Comprehension** (through retell). John Munro.
  This was administered individually to each student in the control and intervention groups at pre and post intervention. This task requires the student to retell the events in a short narrative in sequence. I recorded each student's retelling digitally, as well as in written format at a later stage, to capture everything about the way the students use their oral language.

- **Synonyms Task.** John Munro.
  This was administered to each student in both groups pre and post intervention. As the students are in Years 1&2, I administered only the first 20 words in the task. This task determines how limited, or how wide the scope, of the student's ability to provide semantically and/or grammatically correct synonyms for the target words.

- See Appendix 1 for a list of the "Read To" texts and excerpts used in the lesson series.

- See Appendix 2 for the lesson series in greater detail. Materials used in the lesson series are listed beside each session.

Procedure:

The tasks were administered to all students individually, in the following order.
Running Records, Synonyms Task and Listening Comprehension.
The ten teaching sessions were conducted over a period of 3 weeks or so. It was intended to take these sessions as close to every second day as possible, but sometimes this was not the case. There were times when there were larger gaps than two days between teaching sessions for the intervention group, but this was unavoidable and one of the variables I could not control.
Each of the ten sessions for the intervention group lasted between 45-50 minutes and an additional session was added at the beginning of the series to introduce the students to each other as a working group, to give them a sense of focus, set up common expectations and so on.
Each session involved collecting the intervention group from two classrooms at the same time of the day and the lessons were held in a small room within the school.
Each session was built around a combination of the following elements.
- *Getting Knowledge Ready (GKR)
- A "Read To" text which was either
-introduced, read and discussed in relation to meaning
-referred to regarding target words and possible synonyms
-referred to in modelling a procedure for students (think aloud, prior knowledge, questioning, using context clues or other forms of gaining access to vocabulary meaning)
-referred to as a prompt for retelling purposes if students were having difficulty in retelling segments of stories without the text, or where other scaffolding wasn't working for them (eg. Who? What? When? Where? Why? and Feelings? prompts)
- Review segments to recall prior learning
- Retelling story (or segments of) sequentially
- *Self Talk- component that could be used anywhere in the session to promote action that can be used again when reading independently away from the group. This was also used as part of the "Consolidation and review" section at the end of each lesson.

*Refer to notes from Subject 1 - 472-697 (John Munro)

Results

The results have been placed into "pairs" for comparison of the Control and Intervention groups' pre and post test information.

See also Appendix 4 for raw data tables.
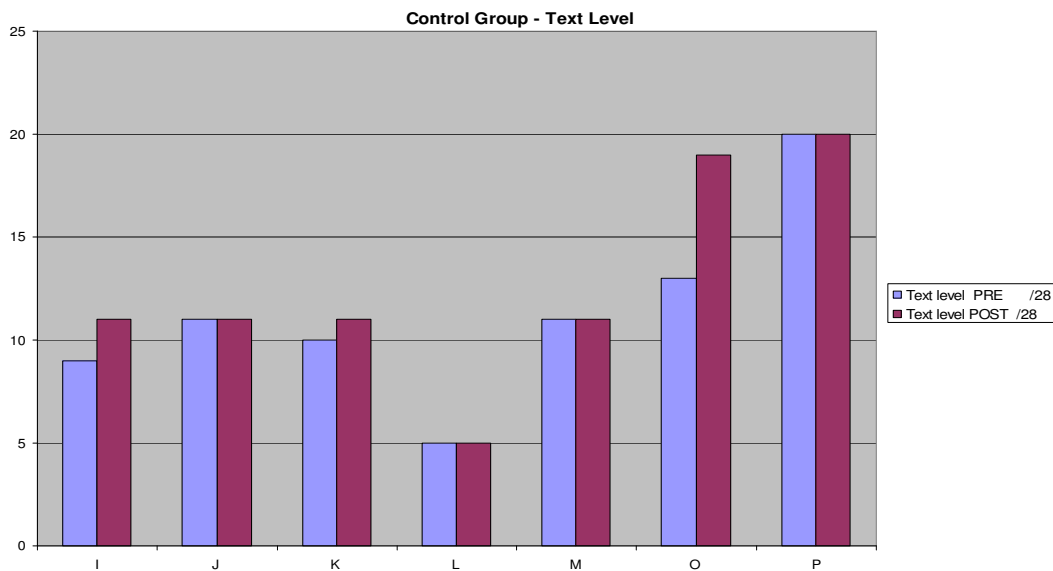
At entry to the study the pre test scores for the Control group showed the students' instructional text levels to vary from Level 5 to Level 20. At the end of the study 3 students (I by 7.14%, K by 3.5%, & O by 21.43%) had made gains in their instructional levels and 4 (J, L, M and P) remained the same at the same levels. Student O made the largest gain and this may be attributed partially to good classroom teaching combined with his being on the Reading Recovery program during the study.
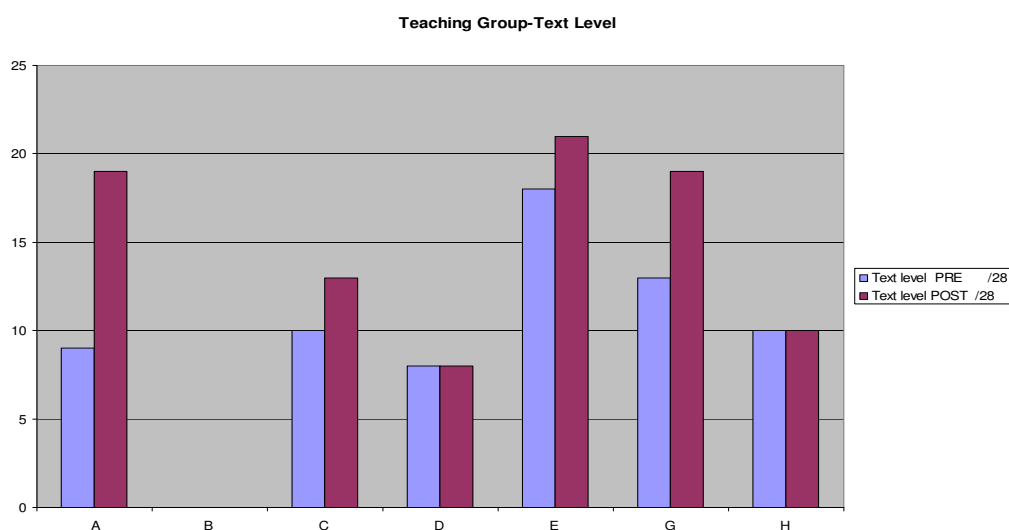
At entry to the study the pre test scores for the Teaching group showed the students' instructional text levels to vary from Level 0 to Level 18.

Anecdotally, it is worth noting that students B and D had difficulty engaging in the series of lessons initially, and maintaining focus for the duration of the first few sessions. This may or may not have a bearing on their decoding abilities. When playing synonym games involving reading and sorting familiar target words and categorizing synonyms, Student B needed high

level support, and Student D occasional support, which makes sense in the relation to their instructional reading levels indicated here.

At the end of the study the post test results for the Teaching group indicate 3 students' instructional levels remained the same (Students B, D, H) and 4 students' instructional text levels increased by 35.7% (Student A), 10.7% (Student C), 10.7% (Student E), and by 21.43% (Student G). Student G was also on the Reading Recovery program during part of the duration of the case study and this may have some bearing on the large increase in her instructional text level.

Student A's increase in her decoding ability was a complete surprise to both her classroom teacher and myself!

Although the post test scores are larger than the pre test scores for both groups, indications are that the difference between the two groups was not significant.

Control Group - Reading Accuracy

Teaching Group Reading Accuracy
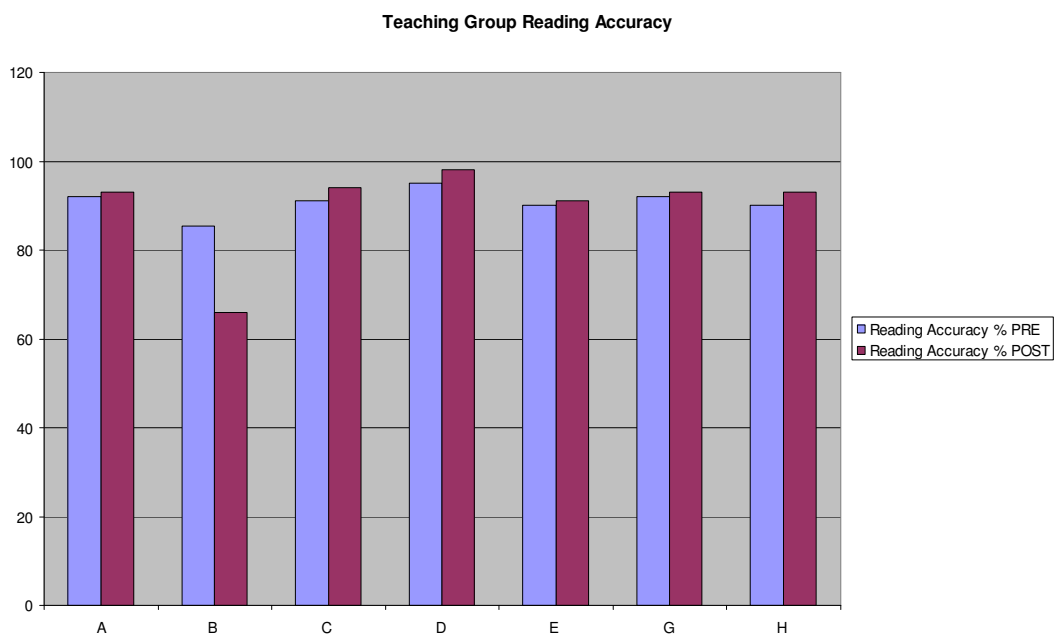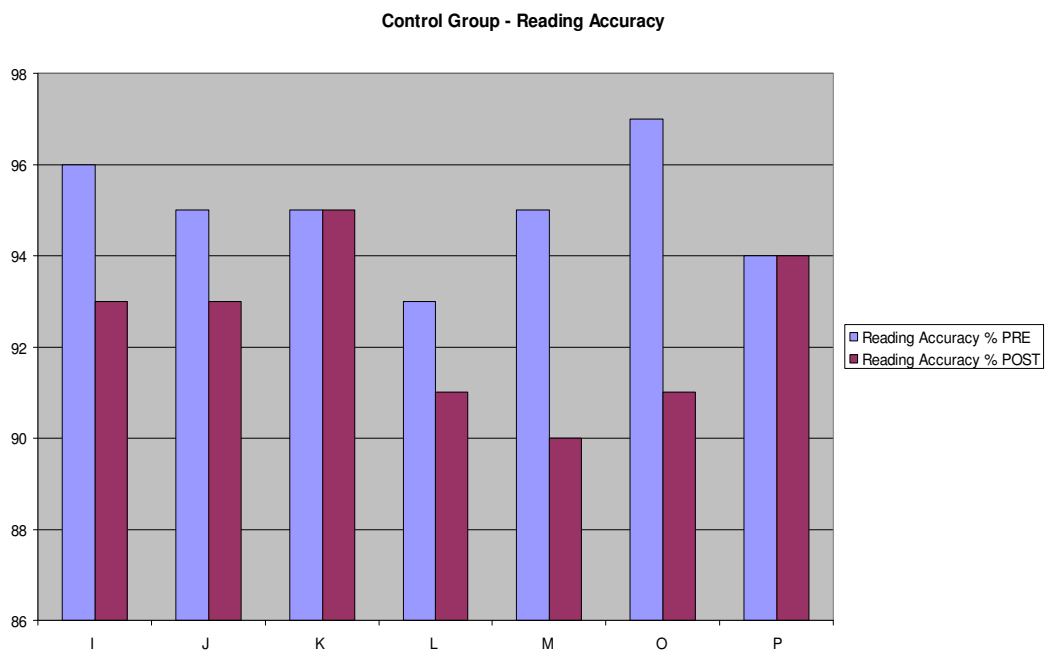
With regard to Reading Accuracy, the Control group at post test had two students (K &P) scoring the

same as at pre test (94% & 95%). The remainder of the group's Reading Accuracy rates decreased slightly ranging from 2%-6%. Students J & L by 2%, Student I by 3%, Student M by 5% and Student O by 6%. All students in the Teaching group, except for Student B, made slight gains ranging from 1% to 3% increase in their Reading Accuracy at post test. Student B's Reading Accuracy however declined by19.5% compared to her pre test. It was hoped that there might be some link between Reading Accuracy and making better predictions with unfamiliar words in texts after the focus on synonyms. However there is no evidence of any link regarding a transfer over to the reading of continuous texts from the mostly "oral" based work done with synonyms during the lesson series.

Control Group- Synonyms Task
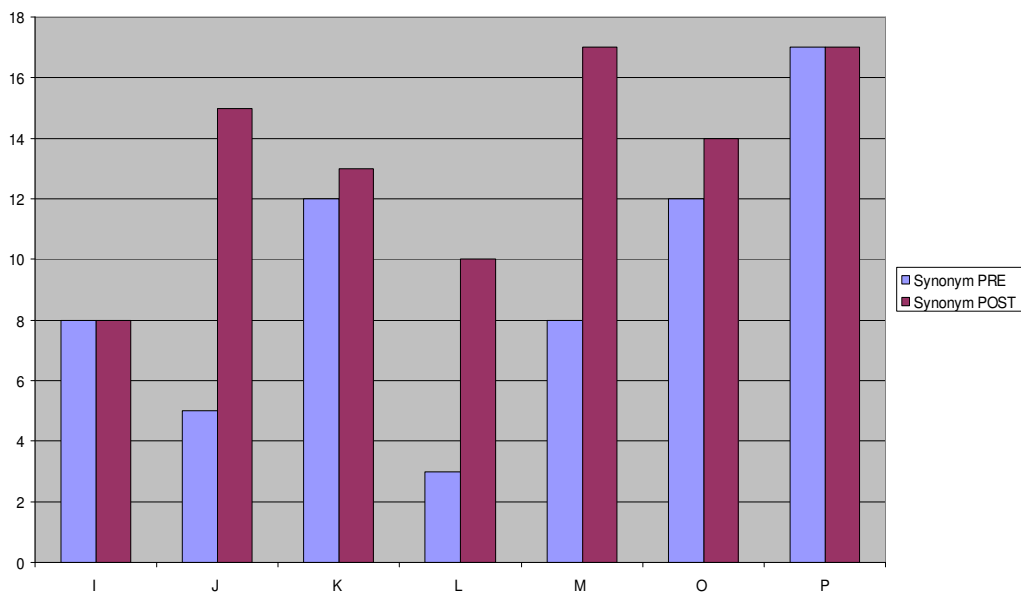
Teaching Group-Synonyms Task
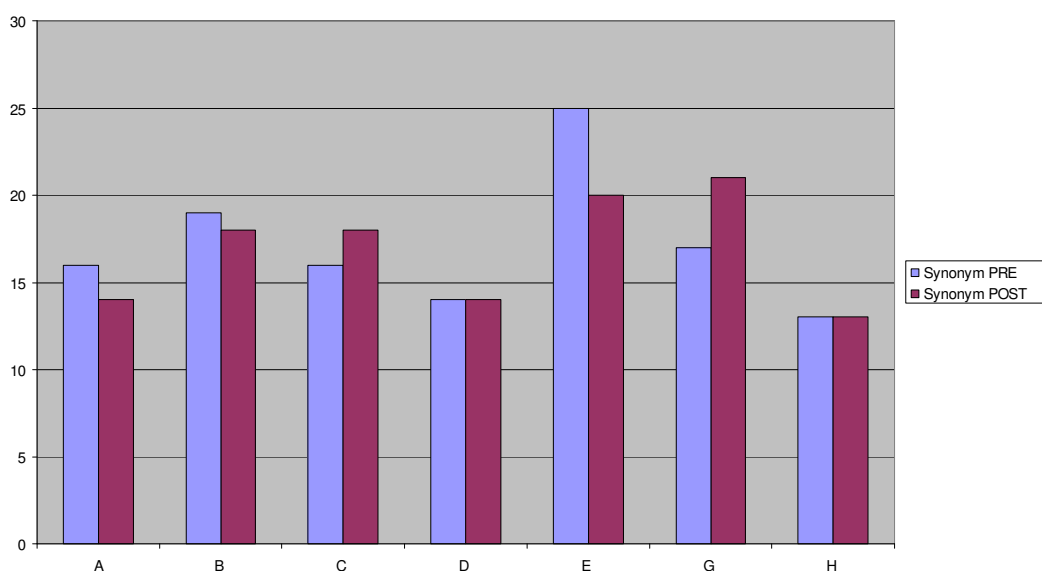
In the Synonyms Task, Control group Students I and P retained the same score at both pre and post tests while Students K and O made slight gains in their scores. Student J's raw score tripled, while Students L and M more than doubled their raw score from pre test. This was pleasing to see considering the difficulty these children had at pre test in providing what could be classed as a synonym. There may be a link here to good classroom teaching where purposeful talk is nurtured and "meaning making" is supported in a variety of ways.

In comparison the Teaching group did not fare as well based on their raw scores. Two students' results remained the same as at pre test (Students D & H), while Students A & B scored slightly lower than at pre test. Student E scored lower by 20% of his score at pre test.

Although this was disappointing it from a pre and post test score perspective, I was pleased to see from the anecdotal assessment (see Appendix for lesson series) the students in the Teaching group had retained some of the meanings to the specific target word synonyms we had focussed on during the lesson series.

Control Group-Listening Comprehension
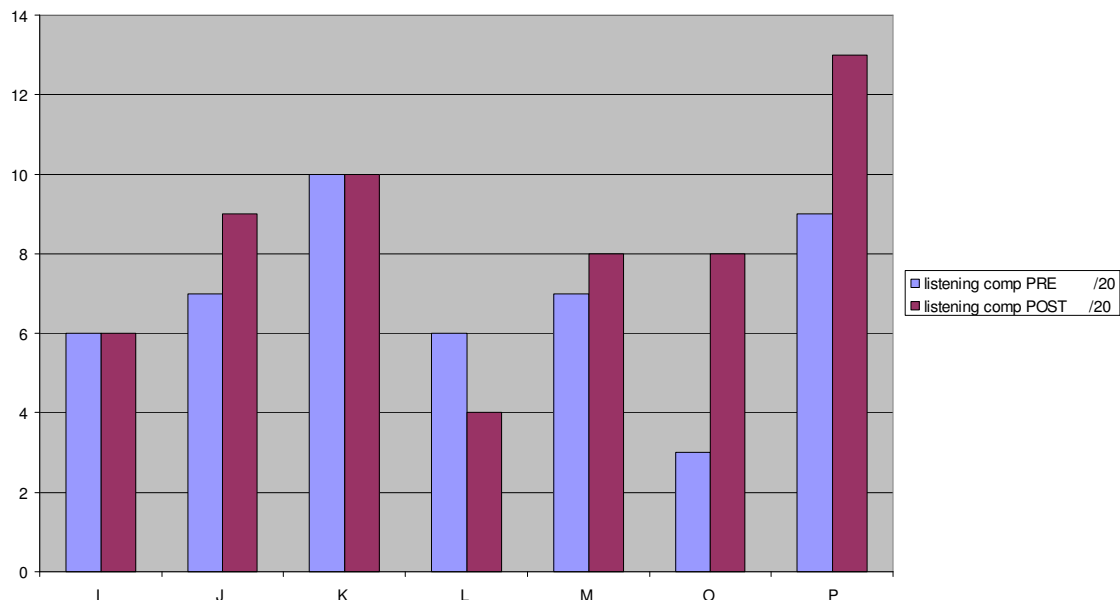
In the Listening Comprehension (Retell) Control group Students I and K's scores were the same as at pre test.   Student J's score increased by 10%, M increased by 5%, O increased by 25%, P increased by 20%. Student L's score however, decreased by 10%.

Teaching group-Listening Comprehension
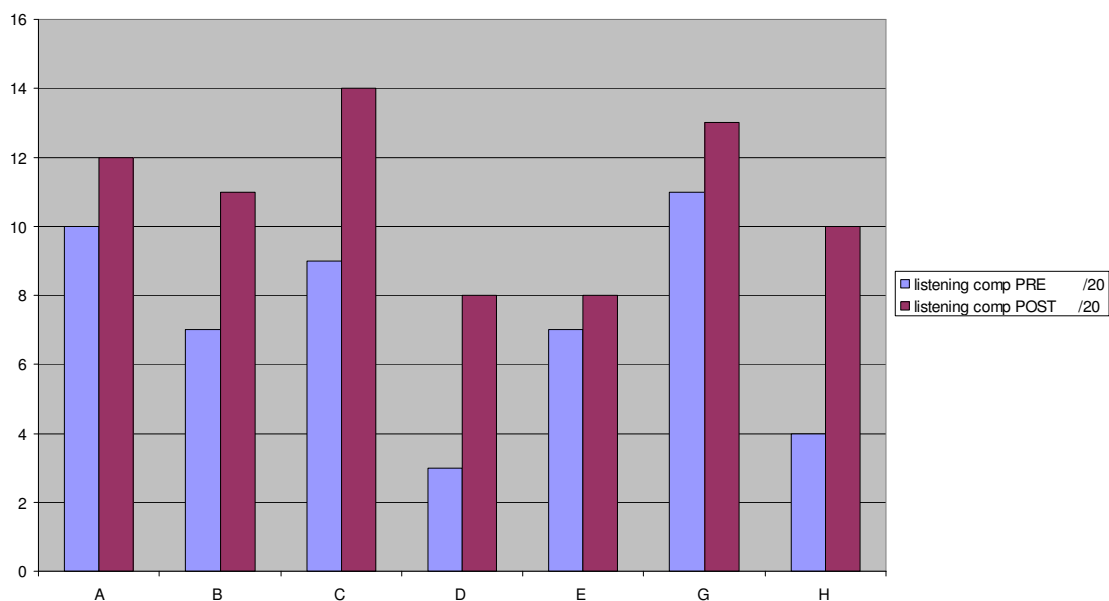
In the Listening Comprehension (Retell) all Teaching group students made some kind of gain compared to their pre test scores. The ranges varied however as indicated below.

Students increased their score by A 10%, B 20%, C 25%, D 25%, E 5%, G 10%, H 30%.

Student H's 30% increase is particularly welcome to see as this area of oral language has been very troublesome for her in the past.

The fact that all students in the Teaching group made some gain here was pleasing to see as in a very small way it heads towards the direction I was aiming for in terms of seeing if explicit teaching of synonyms combined with story retelling has any impact on listening comprehension.
Overall however, it is noted that the post test scores are larger than the pre test scores for both groups and that the difference between the two groups was not significant.

Discussion

It was of interest to note that the Synonyms Task results indicated that the post test scores were not larger that the pre test scores for both groups however the difference between the two groups is significant. All of the Control group students equalled or bettered their previous raw scores whereas the Teaching group only 4 equalled or bettered their previous score. The nature of this task was particularly difficult for all students across both groups. It was observed that many of the students initially didn't understand what I was asking them for, even after practising 2 or 3 words before commencing the Synonyms Task. In place of a synonym, many of the students provided rhyming words, antonyms or words that started with the same initial letter. I realised at this point that this was something we needed to embed in our teaching and learning on a regular basis, in order to help build up our students' vocabularies. This is not only helpful for students in expressing themselves more clearly, but also in order to have choices about the words they use because they can access their meaning.
"Speaking and listening are the foundation skills for reading and writing. To read and write well by the end of third grade…children must have a solid foundation in oral language." Resnick and Snow (2009) cite a landmark study of toddlers and preschoolers in professional, working class, and very low income families found huge differences in children's language development over time. The study, described by Hart, B. and Risley, T. (1995), clarifies the advantages for children whose parents talk frequently to them, make time to listen to them and ask for their opinions.
"The study documented that children in families with the highest income and education levels have bigger and more expansive vocabularies and use more sophisticated sentence structures than do children from the poorest families…in fact the study estimates that by age 3, children in professional families have heard 30 million words, children in working class families have heard 20 million, and children in families receiving welfare have heard 10 million. This study underscores the vital role teachers and school communities play in helping to support children who come to school with little language experience."

In relation to the Listening Comprehension, any little gain made by any of the students in either group was welcomed as most of the students across both groups scored below 10 in the pre test. To hear, record and type (at a later stage) their retelling of the short narrative was a very interesting task which opened my eyes (and ears) to
- How much of the text they missed
- How much was forgotten or not sequentially repeated
- How much was assumed in the retelling (so that the specifics weren't stated explicitly)
- How much many of these children didn't have the words for, to repeat the narrative almost accurately
- How many of the main elements / story events were missed

Having all this in mind, I was surprised to find that each child in the Teaching group had made some tiny gain. I had not expected that at all as the lesson series had to be changed a few times as I went along due to realizing that it was too much for many of these students to
- Try and retell a familiar story sequentially
- Try and retell in sentences that make sense
- Try and retell a familiar story with/without picture prompts or the book

- Try and retell using a "Who? What? When? Why? Where? Feelings?" prompt chart that lent itself to thinking about main elements in the narrative but not necessarily in sequence. This became very confusing for the students and had to be abandoned. Retelling segments of the text instead of whole text with picture prompts was the best scaffold for most of the children in the intervention group, and even that was still difficult for some.

The implications here are that I/ we need to keep finding ways to break tasks down for students, keep the learning explicit re one aspect of oral language at a time, and over time remove the scaffolds that then leads to independence.

In relation to the use of *Read Aloud* texts and vocabulary building through explicit use of synonyms, it was decided that during this study, reading aloud (or *"reading to"*) students would be the best vehicle to employ in an effort to make an impact on the intervention group's vocabulary through the explicit teaching of synonyms. Both fiction and non-fiction texts were used for this purpose.
The research on the effect of reading aloud to young children for the purpose of widening their vocabulary knowledge is mixed. In Cheryl K. Iannucci's article on the work of McGee and Schickedanz (2007) in the area of interactive read-aloud stories with preschoolers, she states that "On the one hand, researchers have validated that reading aloud affects vocabulary development (Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Whitehurst et al., 1999), acquisition of literary syntax and vocabulary (Purcell-Gate, McIntyre, & Freppon, 1995), story recall (Morrow & Smith, 1990)…
In contrast, researchers have found only a modest relationship between the frequency and quality of parent-child read-alouds during preschool and later first-grade reading achievement (Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994). These studies suggest that merely reading books aloud is not sufficient for accelerating children's oral vocabulary development and listening comprehension. Instead, the way books are shared with children matters."
This has implications for many of the students in both the Teaching and Control groups in that our choices of texts can sometimes be a help and at other times a hindrance to their vocabulary development, especially if we don't take the time to select texts carefully. Good and varied text selections need to be made based on what you know about the students your teaching in to maximise the potential for contributing to a growing vocabulary.
"Research has demonstrated the most effective read-alouds are those in which children are actively involved asking and answering questions and making predictions rather than passively listening (Dickinson, 2001). These read-alouds are called interactive or dialogic and result in gains in vocabulary (Hargrave & Senechal, 2000)."p2 This was taken into consideration when designing the intervention with the intention of revisiting target words and their meanings on repeated occasions. In addition to this it was envisaged that dipping back into these read-aloud texts would be a useful way of scaffolding students for the purpose of retelling the stories.

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Serry, Tanya, Rose, Miranda, and Liamputtong, Pranee (2008) *Oral language predictors for the at-risk reader: A Review,* International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, 10:6, 392-403 LaTrobe University, Bundoora, Australia.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1: "READ TO" TEXTS USED FOR LESSON SERIES.

Fiction-

David Goes to School. David Shannon, Published by Scholastic Inc. 1999

Tough Boris. Mem Fox. Voyager Books, Harcourt, Brace & Company 1994

Mrs. Wishy-Washy. Joy Cowley. The Story Box Series, Shortland Publications Inc. 1980

Billy Balloon. Carol Blackburn, Libby Handy. Read it Again Series, Ashton Scholastic Ltd. 1981

Non-Fiction   (Excerpts taken from the following texts)

Trees. pp. 4-5, Paul McEvoy. Go Facts Plants Series – Published by Blake   Education 2002

Plants. pp. 6-7,   Paul McEvoy. Go Facts Plants Series – Published by Blake Education 2002

Crabs. pp. 2-5, Andrew Campbell. Sunshine, Wright Group Publishing, Inc. 1996

APPENDIX 2: LESSON SERIES FOR TEACHING GROUP

SESSION DETAILS AND MATERIALS NEEDED **Introductory Session** 30 – 40 min. Prompt chart for retelling story elements, who ?, what ?, when ?, where ?, why ? (see Appendix 3) *Read To* text… David Goes to School by D.Shannon	Meet with Intervention Group before commencing 10 sessions to familiarise students with each other as a working/learning group and to explain what we'll be thinking, talking and reading about over the following 10 sessions. Explain and elicit from children expectations of how we will help each other to learn over these sessions: • GKR every session (Getting Knowledge Ready) • We listen to others when they speak and let them finish what they are saying • We speak in sentences when we are having discussions, asking or answering questions, and retelling stories We will be thinking of words we know that have the same meaning as some of the words in the books we'll be reading. We will be looking for and using these (synonyms) to help us understand what we read and make good guesses about what some words we read (unfamiliar) might mean • As we read and discuss texts we'll be thinking about Who? What? When? Where? Why? and Feelings? (involved in relation to the text) as we retell it in sequence as best we can. Commence reading story *David Goes to School* to model (teacher) and "rehearse" how we will go about some of the elements mentioned above.	**Observations**
Session 1 40-50 min.	1. G.K.R. component. 2.Revisit the *expectations* discussed in our introductory session. Model/recast sentences to children, as necessary, during our conversations about texts, in order to establish the expectation that any conversation we have about texts will be conducted in	Responses/Anecdotal observations and data collected. Note: The collective responses outlined here are a combination of student and teacher contributions. These are added

Read To text… David Goes to School by D.Shannon Chart paper, easel etc for recording responses (No.2) and synonyms, Target words: Halls Tardy Class Raise Recess Synonyms recording chart	meaningful "sentences". 3. Establish that when we read we expect to gain meaning from a text and that we will explore the various ways we might go about this. Record children's collective responses to this and use/display/add to the following points for future referral as the lesson series progresses… When we read we can… • Use of title to indicate topic • Use of illustrations • Connect to our experiences • Use our knowledge of word meanings… • Ask questions about what we don't understand *4.* Explain that as we continue reading *David Goes to School* we will pause to think about and discuss parts of the story where we need to clarify meanings for certain words (target words-synonyms) 5. Create synonyms (model first) for target words then give students opportunities to re-use these target words in the sentence from the story in place of the original word, in order for them to see that other words can have the same meaning and still make sense within a particular sentence. Keep those that make sense and discard those that don't fit with the author's intended meaning. 6. (Explore also other avenues of gaining meaning from text, as appropriate, and when the opportunity presents itself, for example, pictorial and context clues, questioning meaning…) 6. CONSOLIDATION and REVIEW Summarize (self talk modelling) with reference to use of synonyms and how these help us to understand the text better.	to, when appropriate, with the development of the lesson series. *(Italics indicate agreed wording recorded and referred to during the lesson series) When I'm reading I can…* • *Think about the title* • *Think about what the words mean* • *Think about what the sentences mean* • *Think about the whole story* • *Think of other words that mean the same thing* • *Ask "What does that mean?" when I don't understand*
Session 2. 40-50 min. Sentence strips *Read To* text… David Goes to School by D.Shannon Synonyms word cards	1. Prompt for GKR 2. Summarize our learning about gaining meaning from text as experienced so far, and encourage students to use those strategies when and where appropriate as we explore texts within this group, and whenever else they read. (See No.2. Session 1. Refer to sentence strips and add any other strategies that arise and may be used during the session, when/where appropriate) 3. Revisit previous session's synonym lists and their meanings for target words from text David Goes to School. Distribute copies of these, on cards, to students. Students re-organize synonyms list words they created to match the target words with the same meaning. 4. Discuss (and model self talk) about how using other words we know (synonyms) enhances our understanding of what we read and helps us to make good guesses about the meaning of unfamiliar words we encounter in texts. 5. Continue to read David Goes to School locating more target words and stopping for children to provide synonyms (record) 6. At completion of text reading, provide opportunity for discussion re reflection on the events in the text as a whole. (Some of this will naturally occurred during the reading of the text.)	All children in the group had difficulty (to various degrees) in retelling story events, even with the prompt poster to refer to. I modelled again using the poster as a prompt and elements of the David Goes to School story, but for most children there was too much for them to remember and refer to, given the number of events to choose from in the text, and the (as yet) unfamiliar "Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why? and Feelings?" poster to refer to. As soon as this was realized the task was broken down to an oral retelling of two event sentences about the children themselves. This was more manageable for them at this point and meant modifying future sessions when including retelling aspects.

	7. Introduce use of the "Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why? and Feelings?" prompt poster to assist with retelling of text events. Model retelling of the story in full sentences using the poster as a prompt. Each student then contributes to retelling events of the story in sequence using the "Who, What, When, Where, Why, and Feelings" prompt poster. Provide support if they find this difficult to do. (Verbal support and using pictures in text as a prompt may be necessary too.) 8. CONSOLIDATION and REVIEW Summarize today's learning and encourage use of (self talk) that acknowledges how knowing synonyms for unfamiliar words we encounter in texts, helps us to understand what we read better.	

Session 3
40-50 min.
 	
Read To Text
<u>Tough Boris</u> by Mem Fox
 	
Target Words
• Tough
• Massive
• Scruffy
• Greedy
• Fearless
 	
Who? What? When? Where? Why? Feelings?
Prompt poster to aid retelling
(see Appendix 3)
 	
Synonyms recording chart
	1. Prompt for GKR
	
	2. Revisit summary statements to remind us how we can make meaning as we read and when these can help us. We will use these every time we read. (See No.2 Session 2)
	
	3. Introduce/orientate new story Tough Boris. Discuss story events and meaning of target words as story is being read.
	
	4. Collate synonyms for target words. Each child retells the sentence each new target word comes from with the newly created synonym to check meaning is maintained.
	Add those that make sense to the synonyms recording chart and discard those that do not fit semantically.
	
	5. Model how we can use a "Who, What, When, Where, Why, & Feelings?" chart to assist us in recalling/checking on the main events in the text. Model retelling and sequencing main events in the text, using
	    a) the text illustrations as a quick prompt
	    b) the prompt card "Who, What, When, Where, Why, & Feelings" as a visual referral point. In modelling, point out that this can be used as a reference to check to see that we have included all the main events of the story, during or after the retelling.
	
	7. Give children opportunities to try this with each other in pairs first.
	
	8. Focus on sequencing and retelling the story in meaningful sentences. Model and/or prompt to support children having difficulties in completing meaningful sentences in their retelling. If children are having difficulty with this, support them in prompting of the retelling of events. (Leave the "Who, What, When, Where, Why, Feelings?" as a referral point *after* their retelling and support them through this at that time, if needed.)
	
	9. CONSOLIDATION and REVIEW Summarize today's learning and encourage use of (self talk) that acknowledges how knowing synonyms for unfamiliar words we encounter in texts, helps us to understand what we read better.
		Some children still having difficulty with retelling accurately. Break down to retelling segments of the text eg. two events following each other. Also note, for these children, getting them to retell segments of the text in sequence one after the other around the group, was more successful in terms of completing the task as a group.

Session 4 40-50 min. *Read To* text… <u>David Goes to School</u> by	1. G.K.R. and revisit list of actions we can take when reading to find meaning. 2. Refer to one text at a time to recall lists of synonyms we made which meant the same as target words across both texts.	

D.Shannon
 	
Read To Text
<u>Tough Boris</u> by
Mem Fox
 	
Synonyms word
cards
 	
Sentence strips
 	
Synonyms
recording chart
 	
Read To Text
<u>Billy Balloon</u>
C. Blackburn & L.
Handy
Target words
  • Big
  • Little
  • Thin
  • Below
	3. Use mixture of word cards to sort and match synonyms to target words selected from both texts.
	
	4. Once sorted, ask children to think of when they may be able to use these words again during their day at school or at home.
	
	5. Add to our sentence strips any new learning/understandings which have come out of this, for future referral.
	
	6. Introduce/orientate new text <u>Billy Balloon</u>. Read aloud and pause to discuss text events and synonyms known for target words (and to address any other events requiring clarification re meaning.)
	
	7. Collate/record synonyms for target words children know. Ask children to say the sentence with new synonym to check that meaning stays the same.
	
	8. Model retelling of the main text events in sequence and checking with "Who, What, When, Where, Why, & Feelings".
	
	9. Children rehearse retell of text events in sequence to partners.
	
	10. <u>CONSOLIDATION and REVIEW</u> Summarize today's learning and encourage use of (self talk) that acknowledges how knowing synonyms for unfamiliar words we encounter in texts, helps us to understand what we read better.	

Session 5
40-50 min.
 	
Copies of texts read
to date.
 	
Copy of
W?W?W?W?W?
and Feelings?
prompt chart
(see Appendix 3)
 	
Anecdotal
recording/response
sheet for <u>Retelling</u>
observations.
 	
Paper/clipboard and
pencil for each
child- for <u>Synonym</u>
<u>Spot Check.</u>
 	
Read To Text:
<u>Mrs Wishy-Washy</u>
By Joy Cowley
 	
Target Words
  • Lovely
  • Mud
  • Screamed
  • Tub
  • House
	1. G.K.R. and revisit list of actions we can take when reading to find meaning.
	
	2. Display (front cover only) 3 texts read to students so far in lesson series and explain that during this session we are taking some time to stop and check our understanding of some of our learning so far.
	
	3. Ask each child to choose a text to retell as much as they can from, using meaningful sentences.
	(They can refer to the front cover of the text and/or the "Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why? and Feelings?" chart if they find this familiar enough and helpful now.)
	
	4. Synonyms "meaning recall" and "matching to target words" through a "Spot-Check" game. Children are given random target words from the known texts read to them so far and are asked to write a synonym for their given words.
	
	5. Introduce text <u>Mrs. Wishy-Washy</u>. (Some children in the group indicated they were not familiar with it from their kindergarten, Prep or Year 1/2 reading.) Orientate and discuss text events during the reading, in preparation for the next session.
	Children who are familiar with the text will want to join in.
	
	6. <u>CONSOLIDATION and REVIEW</u> Summarize today's learning and encourage use of (self talk) that acknowledges how knowing synonyms for unfamiliar words we encounter in texts, helps us to understand what we read better.
		<u>Assessment:</u> Retell
		Observations about retelling ability
		
		Child /3
		<table><tr><td>A</td><td>1</td><td>Very low volume voice, not confident & some difficulty with articulation</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>B</td><td>1</td><td>Not confident with retelling in sentences, lots of pausing between phrases</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>C</td><td>1</td><td>Very disjointed sounding retelling</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>D</td><td>2</td><td>Lots of "and then's" but was able to retell main events almost in sequential order.</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td>2</td><td>Lots of "and then's" – retold most events in story.</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>G</td><td>2</td><td>Was very cautious in retelling and took lots of time to think how to structure sentences to sound right when spoken</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>H</td><td>2</td><td>Was able to recall many events from text but disjointed in retelling and some difficulty with sequence of events</td><td></td></tr></table>
		
		Spot Check <u>Maintenance of Familiar</u>

		Synonyms meaning
		Students were asked to provide a word with similar meaning to 5 known synonyms from texts read. Responses indicated in table below.

Child /5

	/5
A	4/5
B	5/5
C	5/5
D	5/5
E	4/5
G	5/5
H	3/5

Session 6 40-50 min. Synonyms recording chart and previously recorded synonym cards *Read To* Text: Mrs Wishy-Washy By Joy Cowley *Target Words* • Lovely • Mud • Screamed • Tub • House	1. G.K.R. and revisit list of actions we can take when reading to find meaning. 2. Re read text <u>Mrs. Wishy-Washy</u> and create/record synonyms for target words, then give children opportunities to re-use these target words in the sentence from the story to check meaning is maintained. Keep/record those that make sense and discard those that don't fit with the author's intended meaning. Transfer these to synonym word cards at the end of the session. 3. Game: give children random synonyms from previous texts. Have them read and tell the meaning of the words then match to the given target word the teacher has placed on the floor/table. Scoring points for each individual/pair or team who matches synonyms to target words could be part of the game if the purpose for the game isn't lost within the competitive aspect. 4. Encourage students to retell today's story in meaningful sentences that are sequential. Prompt if necessary by assisting with joining of phrases and/or sentence starters and/or use of pictures in text in order, to assist students if they falter re • the oral retelling *or* • recalling of sequencing of text events 5. <u>CONSOLIDATION and REVIEW</u> Summarize today's learning and encourage use of (self talk) that acknowledges how knowing synonyms for unfamiliar words we encounter in texts, helps us to understand what we read better.	At this point it was decided not to persevere with the "Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why? and Feelings?" aspect of the retelling as there were too many unfamiliar things for the students to attend to. The chart was displayed for anyone who felt they could refer to it as a prompt to assist in recalling details from a familiar text.
Session 7 40-50 min. *Read To Text* <u>Crabs</u> by Andrew Campbell Target Words • Fierce • Shy • Large • Pair Enlarged print excerpt of pp. 2-5 Crabs. Synonyms recording chart	1. G.K.R. and revisit list of actions we can take when reading to find meaning. 2. Introduce non-fiction *Read To* text, <u>Crabs</u>. Explain that we can often find words we need to guess or locate synonyms for in non-fiction texts we read. 3. Read the text excerpt (enlarged print) and pause to think about and discuss what the target words might mean. 4. Ask children to re read the sentence the target word came from and insert the new synonym to check if meaning is maintained. Discard or keep (record) as appropriate. 5. Re read the excerpt with the students and encourage questioning of any parts of text they didn't understand. 6. Give students opportunities to retell what they read about in the excerpt as best they can.	

	7. <u>CONSOLIDATION and REVIEW</u> Summarize today's learning and encourage use of (self talk) that acknowledges how knowing synonyms for unfamiliar words we encounter in texts, helps us to understand what we read better.	
Session 8 40-50 min. *Read To Text* <u>Crabs</u> by Andrew Campbell Enlarged print excerpt of pp. 2-5 Crabs *Read To* text <u>Trees</u>. Paul McEvoy. Enlarged excerpt pp. 4 & 5 Target Words • Support • Protect • Thick • Canopy • Absorb Synonyms recording chart	1. G.K.R. and revisit list of actions we can take when reading to find meaning. 2. Revisit and re read non-fiction *Read To* text excerpt, <u>Crabs</u> and meaning of target words. 4. Introduce new non-fiction text excerpt <u>Trees</u>. Remind students that we often find words we need to guess or locate synonyms for in non-fiction texts we read. 5. Read the text excerpt (enlarged print) and pause to think about and discuss what the target words might mean. 6. Ask children to re read the sentence the target word came from and insert the new synonym to check if meaning is maintained. Discard or keep (record) as appropriate. 7. Re read the excerpt with the students and encourage questioning of any parts of the text they didn't understand. 8. Give students opportunities to retell what they read about in the excerpt as best they can. 9. <u>CONSOLIDATION and REVIEW</u> Summarize today's learning and encourage use of (self talk) that acknowledges how knowing synonyms for unfamiliar words we encounter in texts, helps us to understand what we read better.	*Student C absent this session
Session 9 40-50 min. Synonym cards for target words to <u>Trees</u> and <u>Crabs</u> *Read To* text <u>Trees</u>. Paul McEvoy. Enlarged excerpt pp. 4 & 5 Read To text <u>Plants</u>. pp. 6 & 7, Paul McEvoy. Enlarged print excerpt of pp.6-7 Target Words • Live • Ground • Contain • Energy Synonyms recording chart	1. G.K.R. and revisit list of actions we can take when reading to find meaning. 2. Revisit and re read non-fiction *Read To* text <u>Trees</u> excerpt, and meaning of target words. 3. Introduce new non-fiction text excerpt <u>Plants</u>. Remind students that we often find words we need to guess or locate synonyms for in non-fiction texts we read. 6. Read the text excerpt <u>Plants</u> (enlarged print) and pause to think about and discuss what the target words might mean. 7. Ask children to re read the sentence the target words come from and insert the new synonym to check if meaning is maintained. Discard or keep (record) as appropriate. 8. Re read the excerpt with students and encourage them to question of any parts of the text they didn't understand. 9. Give students opportunities to retell what they read in the excerpt, as best they can. 9. <u>CONSOLIDATION and REVIEW</u> Summarize today's learning and encourage use of (self talk) that acknowledges how knowing synonyms for unfamiliar words we encounter in texts, helps us to understand what we read better ways.	

Session 10 40-50 min. Synonym cards for target words to excerpts from texts, Trees , Plants and Crabs. *Read To* text Trees. Paul McEvoy. Enlarged excerpt pp. 4 & 5 Read To text Plants. pp. 6 & 7, Paul McEvoy. Enlarged print excerpt of pp.6-7 Synonyms recording chart	1. G.K.R. and revisit list of actions we can take when reading to find meaning. 2. Revisit and re read non-fiction *Read To* text Plants excerpt, and meaning of target words. Also review meaning of target words from text excerpts from Trees and Crabs. 3. Use target word cards and synonym cards mixture from these three texts to play a matching game. Give students random cards which they use to locate and match to the target word. 4. Ask students to locate and re read the sentence the target word came from and check that meaning is maintained. 5. Ask students to choose one of the non fiction texts we have read and to retell some of the information they read about as best they can. 6. CONSOLIDATION and REVIEW Summarize today's learning and encourage use of (self talk) that acknowledges how knowing synonyms for unfamiliar words we encounter in texts, helps us to understand what we read better. Remind and encourage students to keep using what they have learnt during these sessions whether they are reading at home or at school.	Spot Check Maintenance of Familiar Synonyms meaning Students were asked to provide as many synonyms as they could for given target words from texts read. Responses indicated in table below. (see tables below)

Target Word 1 no. of responses /4	Target Word 2 no. of responses /5

STUDENT	/4	/5
A	3	3
B	4	5
C	3	1
D	3	1
E	2	3
G	2	5
H	2	2

ATTENDANCE TO LESSON SERIES IN ADDITION TO INTRODUCTORY SESSION:

STUDENT	Attendance No. of sessions
A	10
B	10
C	8
D	10
E	10
G	10
H	10

APPENDIX 3: WHO? WHAT? WHEN? WHERE? WHY? FEELINGS? PROMPTS

When I want to retell a story I've read, I can think and talk about…					
Who	**What**	**When**	**Where**	**Why**	**Feelings**
was in the story?	happened in the story?	did it happen?	did it happen?	did those things happen?	How do I feel about what happened in the story?

Adapted from **First Steps: Oral Language Resource Book**.
Chapter 2. Language and Literacy- Newstelling (Oral Recount), Narrative, Description.
Education Department of Western Australia. Published by Rigby Heinemann 1997

APPENDIX 4: TEACHING AND CONTROL GROUP RAW DATA

student teaching group	Text level PRE /28	Text level POST /28	Reading Accuracy % PRE	Reading Accuracy % POST
A	9	19	92	93
B	0	0	85.5	66
C	10	13	91	94
D	8	8	95	98
E	18	21	90	91
G	13	19	92	93
H	10	10	90	93

student control group	Text level PRE /28	Text level POST /28	Reading Accuracy % PRE	Reading Accuracy % POST
I	9	11	96	93
J	11	11	95	93
K	10	11	95	95
L	5	5	93	91
M	11	11	95	90
O	13	19	97	91
P	20	20	94	94

student teaching group	Synonym PRE	Synonym POST	listening comp PRE /20	listening comp POST /20	listening comp PRE /6	listening comp POST /6
A	16	14	10	12	5	3
B	19	18	7	11	2	3
C	16	18	9	14	2	3
D	14	14	3	8	2	3
E	25	20	7	8	3	2
G	17	21	11	13	4	3
H	13	13	4	10	1	2

student control group	Synonym PRE	Synonym POST	listening comp PRE /20	listening comp POST /20	listening comp PRE /6	listening comp POST /6
I	8	8	6	6	2	2
J	5	15	7	9	4	4
K	12	13	10	10	4	4
L	3	10	6	4	4	2
M	8	17	7	8	2	3
O	12	14	3	8	3	3
P	17	17	9	13	4	4