Teaching Grade 3 students to paraphrase whilst reading narrative texts will improve literal comprehension (sentence level) of narrative texts.

ABSTRACT

Teaching students, who have difficulties with comprehension, strategies to assist with paraphrasing, enable them to link new ideas to what they already know, retain related ideas in the short term memory and to engage with the text. Engaging with the text allows the reader to make meaning and to understand the content of what they are reading. Often, these readers are good decoders, but are unable to recall key information or to answer questions pertaining to the texts that they read.

Research suggests that teaching students the strategy of paraphrasing will help to improve comprehension. The hypothesis for this study aims to prove such claims. The students in this study were taught the *RAP Strategy*. *RAP* is an acronym used to assist the student to recall the steps in the strategy. The students involved in this study were boys and girls in Grade 3 who were good at decoding text, but experienced difficulty with comprehension. These students were withdrawn from their classroom to form an 'intervention group'. The study consisted of 10 sessions that focussed on synonyms and paraphrasing using the *RAP Strategy*.

This study found that teaching the *RAP Strategy* of paraphrasing does improve levels of comprehension. The data suggest that teaching synonyms and paraphrasing strategies, particularly the *RAP Strategy* is effective in increasing the level of comprehension in students who have difficulty with reading.

INTRODUCTION

The ability to comprehend texts both literally and inferentially enables readers to interact and engage with the text. It allows the reader to predict, create questions about the ideas or plot, monitor understanding, clarify any confusion and to connect information to prior knowledge and experience. The ability to decode text does not mean that a reader is able to comprehend. Many students in the middle years of primary school have a reasonable ability to decode, but this does not necessarily mean that their levels of comprehension match these decoding skills. DiPardo and Schnack (2004) purport that to truly read and comprehend texts, readers are required to engage with the cognitive and affective demands of the text including formulating responses to the text and maintaining critical interest with the text.

Reading in a more informed way sets those students who can read strategically apart from those who cannot (Bishop, Reyes & Pflaum 2006). Reading strategically requires the reader to gain information from the text by reading smarter. To move readers from decoding to meaningful comprehension, they must read strategically. To read strategically, readers must be given a framework for them to place and build upon their knowledge, behaviours and skills in reading.

Researchers suggest that teaching readers strategies to assist with comprehension assists independent reading (Bishop, Reyes & Pflaum, 2006; Fisk & Hurst, 2003; Katims & Harris, 1997; Parker, Hasbrouck & Denton, 2002; Sewell, 2007). It is important to explicitly teach readers strategies that enable them to comprehend texts. It is vital that readers learn and apply the knowledge learnt to new texts and situations. Katims and Harris (1997) suggest that the most effective strategy to support reading comprehension relates to paraphrasing, and they claim that paraphrasing will increase reading comprehension of students of all academic abilities. In a study conducted during the 1980's, high school students learning in special education classes increased their levels of comprehension through the use of

paraphrasing strategies (Katims & Harris, 1997). Data that were collected during this 1980's study, conducted by Schumaker, Denton and Deshler, suggest that the more the student practiced the paraphrasing strategies, the higher their comprehension score (Katims & Harris, 1997). The ability to paraphrase enables readers to use the main ideas and key points within a text, and retell this information using their own words, whilst maintaining the meaning of the text.

To effectively comprehend, the links between reading and writing must be evident. When all models of communication – reading, writing, listening, and speaking – are integrated, which occurs through paraphrasing strategies, deeper understanding of the text ensues (Fisk & Hurst, 2003). Almasi and Gambrell (1997) as cited in Fisk and Hurst (2003) support this idea by noting that 'providing opportunities for students to interact with one another and to challenge others' ideas during discussions supports higher-level thinking.' Fisk and Hurst (2003) state that paraphrasing occurs when the student can convey the main ideas from the text and when they can provide supporting evidence in their own 're-writing' of the text. Students sometimes experience difficulty in paraphrasing as they tend to rewrite or retell the text in a sentence by sentence manner. To be effective at paraphrasing, students are required to express the main ideas of the text and to use their own vocabulary in their paraphrased texts (Fisk & Hurst, 2003).

Katims and Harris (1997) have studied one particular three step paraphrasing strategy, known by the acronym *RAP*. They state that although this *RAP Strategy* has only three steps (**R**ead a paragraph; **A**sk yourself questions about the main idea and details; and **P**ut the main ideas and details into your own words using complete sentences) and it seems to be a simple strategy to teach, it is deceptively more complex than the three steps suggest. Teachers need to be aware of this aspect of the strategy (Katims & Harris, 1997). The use of an acronym, in this case *RAP*, is a metacognitive technique which enables students to gain greater control over their use of the strategy. Acronyms can assist inner cognitive dialogues which enables the student to recall the strategy and to make attempts to employ it when engaged in the reading process (Katims & Harris, 1997).

Katims and Harris (1997) are not the only researchers to investigate the effectiveness of the *RAP Strategy*. Support for the RAP strategy is also noted by Parker, Hasbrouck & Denton (2002), who cite Clark, Deshler, Schumaker, Alley and Warner, and Nelson and Smith as fellow researchers who have explored the use of the *RAP Strategy* as a means to support students' comprehension skill development. The *RAP Strategy* can be described as a 'learning strategy' because it teaches students how to learn as opposed to content or skill specifics. Learning strategies are important because they help students to maintain interest and concentration during learning tasks (Parker, Hasbrouck & Denton, 2002).

This study aims to investigate the use of the *RAP Strategy* to support low-attaining Grade 3 students to improve their levels of reading comprehension. It is proposed that through the provision

of support and by teaching these students this paraphrasing strategy improvement in literal comprehension will ensue.

The hypothesis that drives this action research relates to the link between the uses of the RAP strategy to the students' comprehension attainment levels. This hypothesis will be researched:

Teaching Grade 3 students to paraphrase whilst reading narrative texts will improve literal comprehension (sentence level) of narrative texts.

METHODOLOGY

Design

This study uses a OXO design, in which the gain in comprehension during paraphrasing, following specific teaching of synonyms and paraphrasing strategies, is monitored for Grade 3 students who demonstrate a higher level of decoding skills than comprehending skills.

Participants

The participants are Grade 3 students who currently demonstrate difficulties in comprehension. All students attend a Catholic primary school in an outer-western suburb of Melbourne. All of the participants have had three years of schooling prior to their participation in this study. Their age, gender, entry reading ability, test scores and other relevant reading background prior to the teaching sessions can be read in Table 1.

Table 1.
Student Information, Including Age, Gender, Entry Reading Ability, Test Scores and Other Valid Data to be Used as Selection Criteria for the Study

Name	Gender	Teaching/Control Group	Age in YEARS	Age in MONTHS	ESL	Earlier Intervention	EMA	Paraphrase PRE	Paraphrase POST	Synonyms PRE	Synonyms POST	Read & Retell PRE	Read & Retell POST	NEALE comprehension raw PRE	NEALE comprehension raw POST	NEALE Score comprehension percentile PRE	NEALE score comprehension percentile POST	NEALE Score Stanine Pre	NEALE Score Stanine Post	Running Rec PRE	Running Rec POST
Student A	M	T	9	4	N	N	N	8	23	13	32	2	16	11	16	13	27	3	4	25	25
Student B	F	T	8	7	N	N	N	8	30	16	70	14	21	15	22	30	51	4	5	28	28
Student C	M	T	9	6	N	N	N	10	24	20	46	12	20	14	18	23	35	3	4	28	28
Student D	M	C	8	2	Y	RR	Y	7	7	5	6	6	7	7	7	3	4	1	2	18	18
Student E	M	C	9	4	N	N	Y	8	11	16	22	15	18	15	12	30	13	4	3	24	24
Student F	F	C	8	5	N	N	N	8	10	28	31	7	9	16	15	36	23	4	4	28	28
RR= Running Record																					

These participants have been chosen because they are deemed below the benchmark and scored as average or below against the Neale analysis for comprehension. Insights gained from current running record analyses suggest that these students are able to decode, but have some difficulty in comprehending the text that they read. These students are also most likely to participate in the school's reading intervention program which employs learning strategies from the *Early Reading Intervention Knowledge Program* (ERIK) program. Anecdotal notes also suggest that the participants' abilities to retell narratives are often quite stilted and slow, and in numerous cases, these retellings lacked many key points and important details.

Literacy data scores, which are collected at the beginning of the school year, also have an impact on the initial selection of students who will participate in this study.

Further criteria for selection of participants related to professional dialogues with the school's Literacy Co-ordinator and current and previous teachers. Insights from discussions with these school staff members also indicate that these students are able to decode text at a reasonable standard, but experience difficulties in using information gained through reading, in other areas of the curriculum. It is expected that these students would benefit from extra assistance in learning to paraphrase, which will have an impact on their performance in reading and in other areas of the participants' school learning.

Materials

A number of assessment tools and strategies were used to diagnose current understandings and skills in the areas of comprehension and reading abilities. These tests were administered at the beginning and completion of the research period. The assessment tools and strategies used included:

- Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (Neale, 1998). This was used to determine the level at which the students were comprehending text.
- Spontaneous Retelling Analysis, (Refer Munro, J session 3 notes). These were used to gain an understanding of the level of detail the students could recall when retelling a narrative text.
- RAP cue card.
- Flashcards – synonyms were recorded onto the flashcards and used in a variety of games and tasks with the students.
- Teacher Journal.
- Paraphrasing & Synonyms tests designed by Munro (2005).
- Fry's Readability Scale – to match texts to student's reading ability.

The data that were collected in the assessment period can be read in Table 1.

It is hoped that the classroom teachers at the school will use the findings from this study to assist the participants in further consolidating their facility with paraphrasing by employing the *RAP Strategy* as part of the classroom reading program.

Procedure

The six chosen students for this study were withdrawn from the classroom and tested individually in a quiet setting for all tests except for the synonyms test which was administered to the group. The paraphrasing test was modified due to the age level of the students. The students were asked to orally paraphrase the sentence rather than write, as this would add another dimension to the testing. The responses were recorded onto a tape recorder and later transcribed by the researcher. The Neale Analysis pre-test was conducted by the Literacy Co-ordinator who withdrew the students from their classroom and administered the test individually with each participant. The *Read and Retell* test (Munro, 2005) was administered individually using a text matched to a Year 3 level using the *Fry's Readability Procedure.* The data collected indicate a low level of comprehension. These data were used as a baseline to measure improvement at the end of the ten teaching sessions and they informed the planning of the intervention. The intervention took place over a three and a half week period. The pre-testing commenced May 12th 2008 and the post-testing commenced 9th June.

The six students were then split into two groups, a 'control group' and a 'teaching group'. The 'teaching group' or 'intervention group', were students A, B and C, while the 'control group' were students D, E and F. The students were matched as closely as possible in both groups according to the data collected from the pre-testing, in regards to the students' abilities, gender, age and reading background to ensure as much similarity as possible in both the 'intervention' and 'control group'.

The three students in the intervention were withdrawn for a series of ten lessons of approximately thirty-five minutes duration over a period of three and a half weeks. These sessions were conducted before recess. The participants in the 'control group' remained in the classroom with their teacher and they participated in the usual classroom reading activities. Extra assistance or teaching of paraphrasing strategies was not given to the

'control' students to minimise confounding variables. The ten teaching sessions were based on Munro's (2005) *Comprehension - Paraphrasing Strategy*. Synonyms were taught to the intervention students before beginning to teach paraphrasing. The participants in the 'intervention group' were taught the acronym *RAP* for the paraphrasing strategy. This was done to assist the students in their recall of what they were required to do when paraphrasing:

Read the text

Ask yourself questions about the main ideas and details

Put the ideas into your own words and try to change as many words as you can

This decision was also made in light of relevant research (Katims & Harris, 1997).

The beginning of each session revised synonyms and the text from the previous day. The focus of the first four intervention sessions was synonyms, both in and out of the context of a narrative text. Paraphrasing sentences from a narrative was modelled by the teacher and the students were encouraged to collectively and individually paraphrase sentences. The focus of the following six sessions centred on paraphrasing and the use of the *RAP Strategy*. The steps of this strategy were recorded onto a cue card and referred to during each session, from session five. The sessions were scaffolded, making use of teacher modelling, to students working in pairs, then individual paraphrasing of texts. New learning was articulated at the end of all sessions. The constant structure of the sessions was seen as an independent variable that would help to minimise any dependent variable. The texts used were all narrative texts as this genre was most familiar with the students and easy for them to visualise, which would help them to paraphrase. The *Fry's Readability Procedure* was used to match the texts to the students' reading ability. The teacher journal was used to record observations and anecdotal notes on individual students and to help to cater for individual needs as well as to inform the classroom teacher when tailoring the lessons.

The structures of each lesson made use of findings from the Collins Model of Teaching and Learning (Collins, Brown & Newman, 1989). Further information about the structure of the first 4 lessons and the remaining 6 lessons can be found in the Appendices sections of this paper.

RESULTS

The influence of teaching the *RAP Strategy* to improve comprehension was compared and measured using the following pre and post-tests. In the following tables, Students A, B & C represent the 'intervention group', while students D, E & F represent the 'control group'.
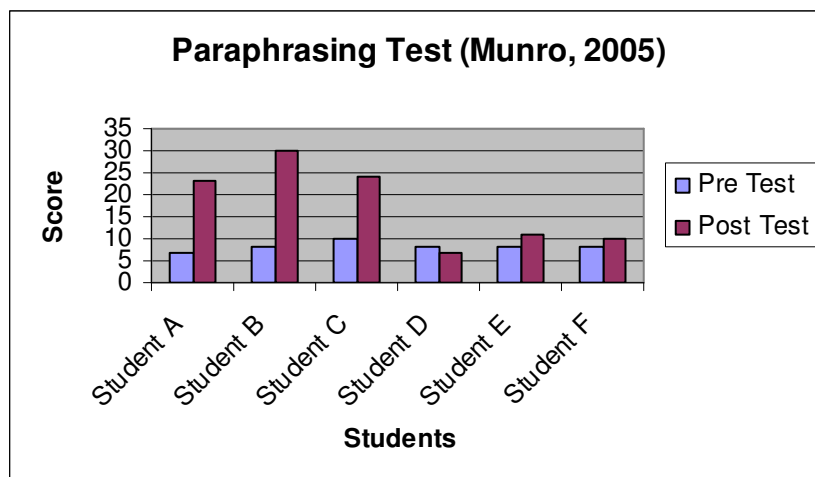

Figure 1. Pre-test and post-test data collected using the Paraphrasing Test (Munro, 2005)

The above table describes the student results, both pre and post-testing, in the Paraphrasing test designed by Munro (2005). The data regarding student performance, before their participation in the study, indicate that all students in both the 'intervention' and 'control groups' had results that ranged between 7 and 10 correct responses out of a possible 32 (or between 22% and 31% of correct responses). The post-test data reveal that the participants in the 'intervention group' significantly improved their performance with scores ranging between 23 and 30 correct responses (71% to 93%). This is an increase in correct responses from 49% to 62%. It is evident in the post-testing, that the 'control group' results remained similar to those collected in the pre-testing period (between 22% and 34%). These data indicate that the participants in the 'intervention group' were able to use synonyms and paraphrase sentences appropriately.
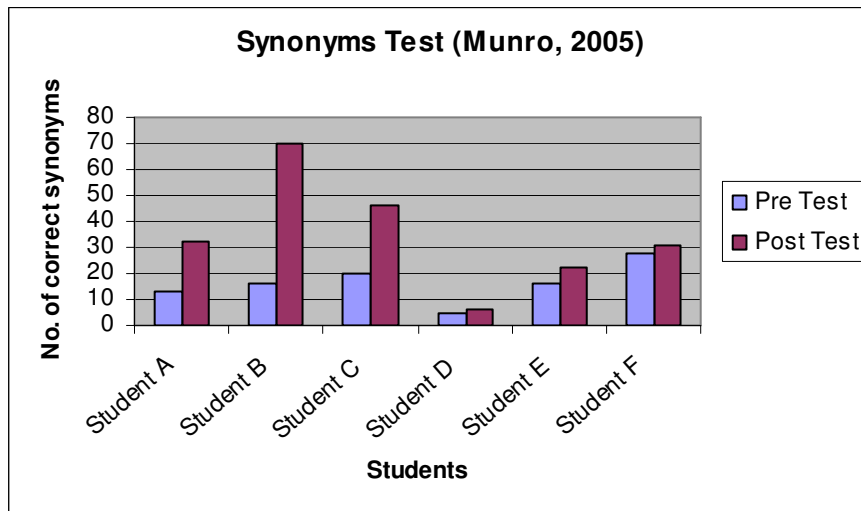
Figure 2. Pre-test and post-test data collected using the Synonyms Test (Munro, 2005)

The Synonyms Tests (Munro, 2005) was used to drive the planning and teaching of the ten intervention sessions. Figure 2 shows that the students in the intervention gave between 0.4 to 0.7 synonyms per word in the pre-test and between 1.1 to 2.4 synonyms per word in the post-test. The students in the 'control group' made no improvement, with their results remaining between 0.2 – 1 synonym per word for both the pre-test and the post-test. The data contained in Figure 2 clearly shows a notable improvement in student performance of between 0.7 to 1.7 synonyms per word for those students who participated in the 'intervention group'. There is a very slight improvement in the 'control' students. However, this improvement in the 'control' students may be due to the fact that the pre-test was an introduction of synonyms for all students. Therefore all students had some level of exposure to synonyms, even if minimal for the 'control' students, and they may have used this to their advantage in the post-test.
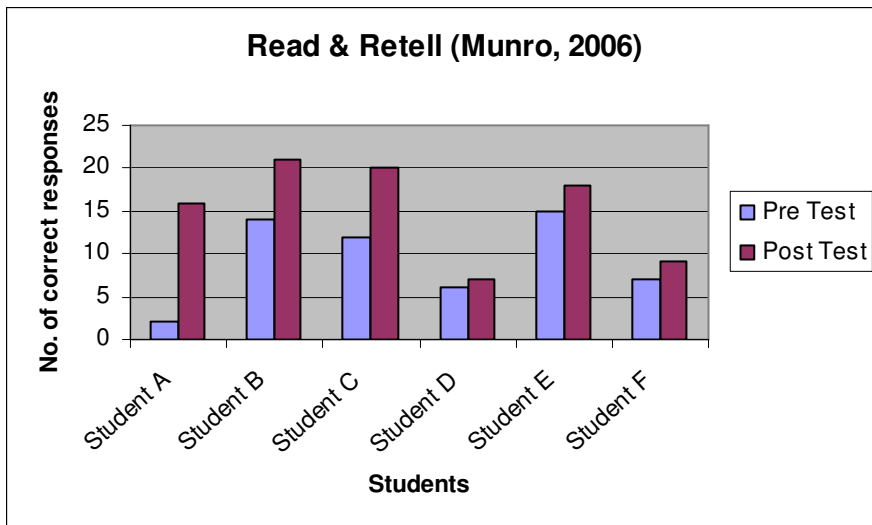
Figure 3. Pre-test and post-test data collected using the Read and Retell Test (Munro, 2005)

All students read a Grade 3 levelled text, as determined by the *Fry's Readability Procedure.* The students were asked to recall as much information as they could about the key events and plot within the narrative. Students in the 'intervention group' were able to recall on average 73% during post-testing. This was 29% more than the 'control' students who were able to recall on average 44% of the plot during post-testing. The students in the 'intervention group' demonstrated an increase in recollection of key events and plot of 30% since the intervention and teaching of the *RAP Strategy*.
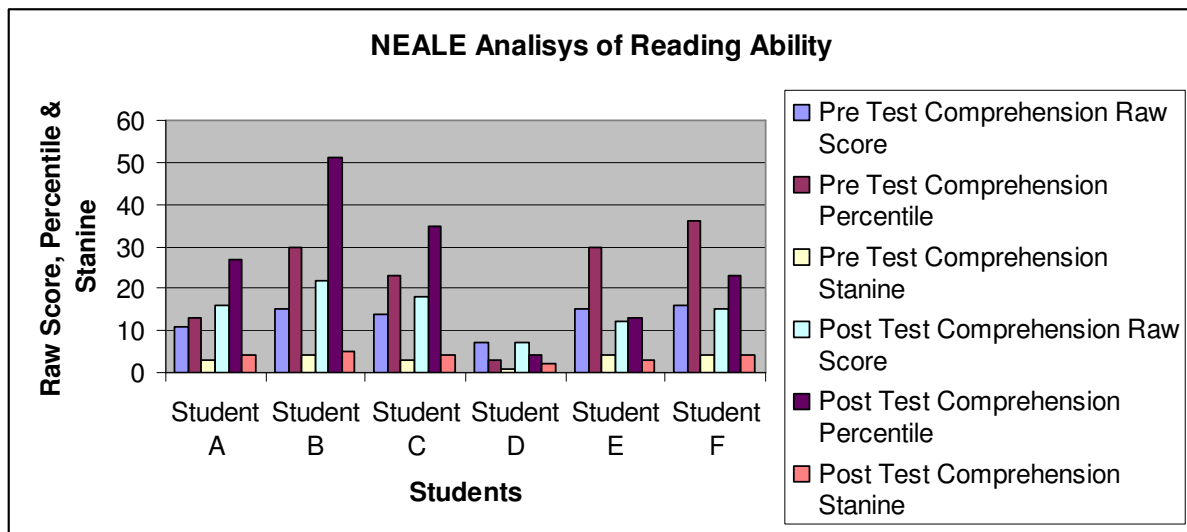
Figure 4. Pre-test and post-test data collected using the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (Neale, 1998)

Figure 4 shows the students' performance in comprehension in the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability. Raw scores, percentile ranks and stanines have been included in the table for comparison. The data, contained in the figure, note an overall improvement in comprehension raw scores, percentile ranks and stanines for the participants in the 'intervention group'. The individual students within the 'control group' had varied results. Student D increased both their percentile rank and stanine, whilst their raw score remained the same. Student E decreased in raw score, percentile rank and stanine. Student F decreased in raw score and percentile rank, whilst their stanine score remained the same. These results alone were too inconsistent to base trends for the 'control group'. However, combined with data from the other tests, it is apparent that the 'control group' has again made no overall real improvement in their comprehension ability according to the *Neale Analysis for Reading Ability* (Neale, 1998).

Whilst the students in the 'control group' (students D, E and F) made no real gains in comprehension, the students in the 'intervention group' made significant gains. Student A was extremely keen and eager to be a participant in this group and he appeared to thrive in such a small group. His read and retell was clear evidence of his ability to utilise the *RAP Strategy*. He was also able to articulate his understanding of this strategy.

Student B made considerable gains in every test. She was able to use synonyms when paraphrasing, and she tried to paraphrase whole passages rather than sentences from earlier on in the intervention. Student B appeared to increase in confidence with each session. Overall, the improvement in her comprehension ability was great and more importantly, anecdotal notes and other classroom assessment data collected by Student B's teacher, suggest that she was able to transfer her knowledge of the *RAP Strategy* into different areas of her literacy learning.

Student C also made great gains in comprehension, which was evident in all of the pre-tests. He was a keen participant in the group, but he needed encouragement to articulate his learning at the end of the intervention sessions. Student C also required more revision of the previous session when beginning a new lesson in the intervention. He would often say that he forgot the content of the day before. It is unclear whether this shows a lack of understanding of the content or whether Student C lacks confidence when speaking in front of peers. This will need to be investigated in the future with Student C.

Overall Student B made the most gains in comprehension, followed by Student C and then Student A. These results indicate support for the hypothesis that facility with a paraphrasing strategy supports the child's ability to comprehend.

DISCUSSION

As the data results demonstrate, the post-testing scores for the 'intervention group' were improved overall, while the scores for the 'control group' show little improvement throughout the study. Results and trends for each of the students in the 'intervention group' demonstrate evidence that prove the hypothesis that drove this research study. It is apparent that teaching students the *RAP Strategy* does improve a students' paraphrasing ability and this can have an impact on their comprehension ability.

These results also support claims in the relevant literature regarding the teaching of paraphrasing to improve comprehension. The teaching of the *RAP Strategy* has impacted upon the comprehension levels of the students involved in the 'intervention group'. These findings contribute to those researched by others in the field of comprehension attainment (Bishop, Reyes & Pflaum, 2006; Fisk & Hurst, 2003; Katims & Harris, 1997; Parker, Hasbrouck & Denton, 2002). By participation in the 10 intervention sessions, the students had opportunities to engage with and comprehend texts (Bishop, Reyes & Pflaum, 2006) whilst learning a specific paraphrasing strategy that enabled them to engage with the reading process (Fisk & Hurst, 2003; Parker, Hasbrouck & Denton, 2002). This research also highlighted the relationship between the frequencies of paraphrasing that a child might engage in with the score that they might receive on comprehension tests (Katims & Harris, 1997). The findings of this study confirm this statement and the ten sessions in the intervention allowed students the opportunity to practice paraphrasing.

Teaching synonyms in the beginning sessions enabled the students to change words within sentences. The students then slowly moved on to changing words and sentences within a passage. Teaching synonyms first, enriched the teaching of paraphrasing as the students were able to replace words in sentences and retell main ideas using their own words, whilst still maintaining the meaning of a text (Katims & Harris, 1997). It was also used as a teaching opportunity to teach students to use a thesaurus correctly and efficiently. The use of the thesaurus was an opportunity to teach the students how to learn rather than teaching specific content (Parker, Hasbrouck & Denton, 2002). This also became apparent during this study through the use of anecdotal notes taken by the students' current teachers, which reported that

the students who were involved in the intervention were able to transfer the use of the *RAP Strategy* into other areas of the curriculum.

An informal self-efficacy test was administered to the students during the pre and post-testing periods. It was noted that in general the responses from the students in the 'intervention group' were more positive than those responses from their peers in the 'control group'. The data from the students in the 'control group' show no real increase or decrease in feelings when post-tested. This suggests that the students in the 'intervention group' were feeling positive and felt more capable towards their learning by the end of the intervention. It was noted that the Running Record levels for all of the students in the study remained the same for both the pre and post-testing. This was expected as these students have histories of slow progress in reading texts of increasing difficulty. In addition to this, the focus was on comprehension of the text, rather than increasing the reading ability of texts of higher levels.

If this study were to be repeated, it is suggested that the books chosen for reading cater for the needs of the 'weakest' reader of the group. This would allow the focus to be about synonyms or paraphrasing and not on the decoding of the text. This would help the students to visualise the story, which would assist with paraphrasing. It would also be of advantage to use big books for the purpose of shared reading as well as directing the focus of the students to particular sentences within texts, rather than having the students search for the sentences in their own copies.

The increase in the comprehension scores can be attributed to the explicit teaching of the *RAP Strategy*. The effectiveness of teaching paraphrasing is evident in the significant increase in results of the post-tests for those students involved in the 'intervention group'. The students in the 'control group' had not been taught this strategy, hence no real increase of recollection of key events and plot as noted in the data from the post-tests.

Implications for teaching practice:

A number of implications exist in relation to this research. Firstly, these implications will be described for classroom teachers and then implications for the literacy education community

will be discussed. It is also important to note here that despite the fact that this study was conducted over a three and a half week period, significant improvements, in terms of comprehension, were made evident within this short timeframe.

The findings of this research have shown that there are benefits for learners should they be taught how to use the *RAP Strategy*. It might be worthwhile for teachers to make paraphrasing an important aspect of their reading program and to help students to see the important role that paraphrasing plays in the comprehension process.

The importance of teaching students the role that synonyms play in language learning is an important implication of this study. The first 4 sessions of this study were the foundations for teaching paraphrasing because it focused the students' learning on synonyms and retelling sentences in their own words whilst still maintaining meaning. Teachers will need to provide opportunities for their students to explore the role of synonyms and ways of expressing similar sentences but without changing the intended meanings. These opportunities could take place in short book discussions, oral language activities and other reading activities like 'shared reading' and 'guided reading' sessions.

Within the timeframe of the study, it was noted that revising the previous session was crucial in assisting the students to internalise the new strategy. This might prove important for teachers to highlight when teaching students and to help them with their metacognition (Katims & Harris, 1997). Although this strategy was taught to a small group of students, teachers might have the capacity to teach it within a whole class situation. It would also be of benefit to revise this strategy and refer the students' attention to its use when engaging in the reading process.

The use of 'cue cards' that describe the *RAP Strategy* enabled the students to become more autonomous in their use of the paraphrasing strategy. Teachers will need to make provisions for the use of such cards or posters that could act as reminders to the students when engaged in reading activities.

Possible directions for future research:

A number of implications for further research in regards to the effectiveness of the *RAP Strategy*. Some of these ideas for research include:

- Investigate the impact of visualisation when using the *RAP Strategy* and the impact that visualisation plays with a student's thinking and use of synonyms when paraphrasing.

- It would be of interest to research the length of time it takes for students to construct deep understandings of the *RAP Strategy* and the ways that some students might innovate upon it to support their comprehension of the texts that they read.

- Explore the effectiveness of the *RAP Strategy* when reading texts other than narratives, especially those texts that are used in other areas of the curriculum including reports, explanations and expositions.

- Investigation for this study occurred at the Grade 3 level. It would be worthwhile to study the effectiveness of the use of the *RAP Strategy* with students older and younger than those who participated in this study. As the focus for lower year levels tends to be on decoding skills rather than comprehending, it would be interesting to investigate the use of the *RAP Strategy* when students are beginning to learn how to read.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research suggest that teaching paraphrasing strategies, particularly the *RAP Strategy* can have an impact on students' comprehension levels. Strategies need to be explicitly taught to students to enable them to use them efficiently and effectively. This study did not test whether this explicit teaching would work as successfully in a whole class situation. If it did not work as successfully, then teachers need to create opportunities for small group work to explicitly teach this strategy. According to anecdotal evidence collected as part of this study, the students' demonstrated the ability to be transfer the use of the RAP Strategy when engaging in the reading process in other areas of the curriculum. It could be inferred that this ability to transfer strategy use shows a consolidated importance of paraphrasing and its impact on helping the comprehension process. It could also be inferred that this strategy has assisted the students to become more autonomous readers – an important goal for learners set by school communities across the nation.

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APPENDICES

There are 3 appendices attached.

Appendix 1 – Teaching sessions outlines

Appendix 2 – The readability of the texts used according to the Fry's Readability Scale

Appendix 3 – Copies of tests and results as used as part of the research for both pre and post-testing

Appendix 4 – The Collins Model of Teaching

Appendix 5 – Parent Consent

Appendix 1

The aim of the teaching sessions was to improve upon paraphrasing strategies while reading, to enhance sentence level comprehension. Paraphrasing enables students to engage in the text and gain a greater understanding at the sentence level. Synonyms were taught to assist and improve the paraphrasing strategy. Throughout the earlier sessions the teacher modelled the use of synonyms and the paraphrasing strategy.

The focus for sessions 1 – 4 was to explore and develop the use of synonyms. The students were encouraged to develop a list in which they could refer to when required. A shared reading strategy was adopted to help scaffold the learning. Texts were matched to the Grade Three level according to the Fry's Readability Scale. Synonyms were identified both in and out of the context of a narrative, using simple sentences and then gradually building up to more complex sentences and eventually two to three paragraphs during the last two sessions. The focus for sessions 5 – 10 was to teach the RAP strategy to improve paraphrasing. Using both the knowledge of synonyms and the RAP strategy at the sentence level the students were asked to **R**eread the sentence, **A**sk themselves what it was about (the main ideas) and **R**etell using their own words. The students were encouraged to check that the sentences still maintained the original meaning and main ideas. To continue to scaffold the learning, the students worked in a group of three before individually, when paraphrasing a paragraph. The final two sessions required the students to incorporate the skills and knowledge taught to paraphrase two to three paragraphs of a narrative text. At the end of all sessions the students were asked to reflect on their learning and articulate their understandings and thoughts.

The session outlines are as follows:

Appendix 1

This paraphrasing strategy was adapted from Munro 'Teaching Comprehension –
Paraphrasing Strategy', taken from the 2007 'Literacy Intervention Strategy' notes. The
teaching of these sessions incorporated the Collins Model of Teaching and Learning (Collins,
Brown & Newman, 1989).

Comprehension Lesson Outlines   Sessions 1-4 Synonyms

Activity	Task Description	Time
Synonyms Review and Games	Students play synonym matching games, where synonyms are written on flashcards and distributed to the students and then bundled together according to meaning. These synonyms are chosen by the teacher and taken out of context of a narrative.	5 mins
Synonym Defining	Students define words chosen by the teacher from the children's thesaurus, ensuring that meaning is maintained.	5 mins
Synonym identification (Shared reading)	Students read shared text chosen by the teacher and matched to a Grade 3 level using the Fry's Readability Scale. Teacher models retelling a sentence by using and changing synonyms in that sentence. Students asked to identify synonyms within the passage. Teacher then identifies particular synonyms within sentences and asks students to offer suggestions for the synonym, ensuring that meaning is maintained within the sentence.	10 mins
Text Retelling	Teacher models paraphrasing of text listing synonyms	5 mins

	used. Sentence by sentence. Students retell the text sentence by sentence as a group in their own words.	
Reflection	Synonyms recalled from the session are listed on a poster. Students articulate new learning for the session and reflect on what they now know that they didn't know before. Students are then asked, "How could we use this learning in another way?"	5 mins

Comprehension Lesson Outlines   Sessions 5 – 10 Paraphrasing

Activity	Task Description	Time
Text Retelling	Students retell the text from the previous day in their own words.	2 mins
Synonyms	Teacher and students review synonyms from previous session, as listed on poster. Teacher introduces new synonyms that will be encountered in the shared / independent reading text.	3 mins
Text Reading	Students read the text: (Shared Reading for sessions 5 & 6) (Independently for sessions 7 – 10)	5 mins
Sentence/paragraph retelling	Teacher identifies a sentence for sessions 5-6, paragraph for sessions 7 - 8 to be read and retold. Sessions 9 – 10 students to retell 2 – 3 paragraphs. Students are cued to paraphrase and then say what they did. (Refer to RAP strategy) Teacher encourages students to choose a sentence to paraphrase. Teacher continues to model paraphrasing of various sentences within the text to scaffold the learning, then	5 mins

	encourage students to retell as a group and finally independently. As a group revise and discuss the main ideas and details of the text.	
RAP Strategy	Using same text, students use the RAP strategy on the cue card to **R**e-read, **A**sk themselves questions about the main ideas and details, **P**ut the ideas into their own words, trying to change as many words as possible. Sessions 5 & 6 group task Session 7 – 10 pair/individual task – to scaffold the learning.	10 mins
Reflection	Students articulate new learning for the session and reflect on what they now know that they didn't know before. Students are then asked, "How could we use this learning in another way?"	5 mins

RAP
Paraphrasing Strategy

Read the Text.

Ask yourself questions about the main idea and details.

Put into your own words. Try to change as many words as you can.

Appendix 2

Session	Text	Fry's Readability Level	Series
One	The Giant Seeds	Grade 3	PM+
Two	The Giant Seeds	Grade 3	PM+
Three	Mack's Big Day	Grade 3	PM+
Four	Mack's Big Day	Grade 3	PM+
Five	Jimmy the Gymnast	Grade 3	Foundations
Six	Winter on the Ice	Grade 3	PM+
Seven	The Freeway Turtles	Grade 3	PM+
Eight	The Inventors' Diary	Grade 3	Learning Media
Nine	Penguin Rescue	Grade 3	PM+
Ten	The Bear & the Bees	Grade 3	PM+

Appendix 3

Paraphrase PRE	Paraphrase POST	Synonyms PRE	Synonyms POST	Read & Retell PRE	Read & Retell POST	NEALE comprehension raw PRE	NEALE comprehension raw POST	NEALE Score comprehension percentile PRE	NEALE score comprehension percentile POST	NEALE Score Stanine Pre	NEALE Score Stanine Post	Running Rec PRE	Running Rec POST
8	23	13	32	2	16	11	16	13	27	3	4	25	25
8	30	16	70	14	21	15	22	30	51	4	5	28	28
10	24	20	46	12	20	14	18	23	35	3	4	28	28
7	7	5	6	6	7	7	7	3	4	1	2	18	18
8	11	16	22	15	18	15	12	30	13	4	3	24	24
8	10	28	31	7	9	16	15	36	23	4	4	28	28

Pre & Post Testing Results

Jessie's Surprise

One day Jessie was walking in the park. She heard a noise. She stopped walking and listened. She heard the noise again. It sounded like a small puppy. The noise came from behind a bushy tree. Jessie moved closer and closer. She moved slowly, slowly.

Suddenly out jumped a little puppy. It was brown and fat and it barked at Jessie. It ran through the long grass and tripped over its feet. Jessie picked it up and it licked her face. She laughed and patted it some more. "Go home now puppy," Jessie said. The puppy wagged its tail and barked. Jessie started to go home and the puppy followed her.

"What's that?" asked her Mum.
"This is Spunky," replied Jessie. "Can we keep him?"
"No," said Mum. "We do not have enough room in the backyard."
"Maybe Nanna would like a dog," said Jessie hopefully.
"Nanna already has a dog," said Mum. "We'll take him to the RSPCA."

Mum drove Jessie and the fat brown puppy to the RSPCA. Jessie kissed the puppy and it licked her face and barked. She looked at Mum. "Please Mum," she said. Mum shook her head. "No," she replied. "We do not have enough room in the backyard." They left the fat brown puppy at the shelter where it would be looked after.

On Saturday Michael came over. "Guess what?" he said. "We've got a new fat brown puppy. Come and see." Jessie and Michael went over to Michael's house. Jessie heard a noise in Michael's backyard. Out jumped a fat brown puppy! It ran across the backyard and tripped over its feet. Jessie was excited. It was Spunky!

Retell Checklist
Jessie's Surprise

Needs to include:
Characters
Plot
Key events

Topic	Response Pre-Test	Response Post-Test
Characters: • Mum • Jessie • Michael • RSPCA • Puppy		
Plot: • Jessie finds a dog which follows her home • Mum takes the dog to the RSPCA. Her friend gets the dog.		
Key Events: • Jessie Walked in the park • She heard a noise • She came closer • A puppy jumped out at her • The puppy was brown and fat • It tripped over its own feet • Jessie picked the puppy up • It followed her home • Mum said she couldn't keep it because they didn't have enough room • Nana already had a dog • They took it to the RSPCA • Jessie kissed the pup • They left the pup at the RSPCA • Michael came over • He had a new dog • Jessie went to see the new dog • It was brown and fat • It tripped over its feet • It was the same dog		

26 Items

Appendix 4

	MODEL OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

A model of teaching that considers the nature of the learning process that could be applied to intervention with students who have oral language difficulties is that developed by Collins, Brown & Newman (1989). This model has six principles of instruction, three which are the responsibility of the Teacher and three that are the responsibility of the student.   The principles are as follows:

Responsibility of the Teacher	Modelling	Teacher models the actual task and how it is to be completed
	Coaching	The teacher guides, prompts and provides feedback as the student engages in the task. This support is required on an ongoing basis.
	Scaffolding & Fading	The teacher provides some cues to assist the student to recall how to complete the task. These cues occur less often and are faded out as the student is able to increasingly complete the task independently.
Responsibility of the Student	Articulation	Student explains what they have learned (ie. knowledge / process strategy) and when they can use what they have learned.
	Reflection	Students reflect on what they have learned focusing on identifying what they know now that that they did not know before.
	Exploration	Students are encouraged to consider how they can use what they have learned (ie. knowledge / process strategy) in new tasks and contexts.

Collins, A., Brown, J.S. & Newman, S.E. (1989) Cognitive apprenticeship: teaching the crafts of reading, writing and mathematics. In L.B. Resnik (ed.) *Knowing, learning and instruction: Essays in honour of Robert Glaser*. Lawrence Erlbaum, Hillsdale, NJ.

Appendix 5

Dear _____

I am currently undertaking a course in Literacy Intervention at Melbourne University. I would like to implement a Literacy Action Research project that aims to assist students to improve their literacy skills, particularly in the area of comprehension. With your permission I would like to include _____ in a series of approximately 10 lessons. The teaching of these lessons will be take place in either Term 2 or Term 3 and may be conducted by myself, a literacy aid or the classroom teacher.

Yours truly,

Belinda Koolen

PARENT CONSENT FORM

I / We give my / our consent for _____
                                                              (Full name of child)

to be involved in the activities related to the Literacy Action Research Project being conducted at the

school.

The nature of the activities have been explained to me/ us by the relevant

school staff member.

I understand that my child may be withdrawn from the classroom for these

activities.

I understand that I can withdraw my consent at anytime by notifying the

School Principal.

Signature of parent(s) / guardian(s):   1._____

                                                              2._____

Date: _____

Principal's endorsement: _____

Date: _____