Explicitly teaching strategies, such as paraphrasing through use of synonyms, will improve comprehension in 7-8 year old students of like decoding ability.

Abstract

Many lower primary readers have difficulties comprehending text. Their errors reflect that they don't use meaning as a cue and after reading these students are unable to confidently recount meaningful details or demonstrate implicit understanding. Studies suggest that instruction in cognitive comprehension strategies, such as paraphrasing can improve comprehension in lower primary readers.

The present investigation aims to examine if explicitly teaching strategies, such as paraphrasing through use of synonyms, will improve comprehension for 7-8 year old students of like decoding ability. The comprehension-paraphrasing strategy used is based on a cognitive model where students process information in an active and thoughtful way.

Participants were selected from a lower primary class, based on their perceived low comprehension. The control group continued regular reading instruction, primarily focused on decoding and fluency, whilst the treatment group was explicitly taught to use paraphrasing through the use of synonyms, at the sentence level.

The study results did not directly support the hypothesis, yet indicated that the children were responsive to explicit teaching of paraphrasing through the use of synonyms. The results reinforce that children learn comprehension strategies in response to the explicit, cognitive based teaching.

For educators, this study implies that teaching students to process information in an active and thoughtful way, through the use of a teaching style influenced by a cognitive model, is an effective method towards the learning and application of comprehension strategies by lower primary readers.

Introduction

Comprehension is asserted as a fundamental goal of reading in the lower primary years. Yet school based benchmarks and explicit teaching are commonly focused on students attaining fluency at increasingly higher decoding levels. In such teaching, a causal relationship between fluency and comprehension is sometimes assumed, yet the reading errors of fluent student indicate that students are not using meaning as a cue and after reading are unable to confidently recount meaningful details or demonstrate implicit understanding. As lower primary students move towards middle school, they demonstrate limited knowledge of self-regulated comprehension strategies at the word and sentence levels.

Potentially providing insight into why lower primary students may lack the skills required for comprehension, Parker & Hurry (2007) obtained evidence to show that direct teacher questioning, mostly in the form of 'teacher-led recitation', is the most frequently advocated, and the dominant strategy used for teaching junior comprehension. That when sharing books with children, teachers model the strategies which are used by skilled comprehenders, but they neither make these strategies explicit nor encourage children to generate their own questions about the text. They further advocate the importance of explicitly supporting students as they seek to interrogate the text and become actively engaged in attempts to interpret what they read. This indicates the need for strategy based instruction.

Marcell (2007) cites the "big four" comprehension strategies, as highlighted in much of today's best-practice research, as predicting, visualizing, connecting, and questioning. Marcell notes that fluency and comprehension are indeed correlated facets of reading, but that explicit instruction in fluency does not necessarily have to take precedence over teaching skills in comprehension. She goes on to illustrate the importance of turning readers into metacognitive meaning makers who routinely monitor and repair comprehension.

Honer & O'Connor (2007) impart that one of the most important aspects of self-regulated reading is using and monitoring appropriate strategies and quotes statements made by Clay (1991, cited in Honer & O'Connor, 2007) that the more children continue to learn about reading and writing the more that they engage in these activities. Honer & O'Conner suggest that teachers model the use of a strategy, encourage the students to perform it for themselves and facilitate any strategic reading activity by gradually helping the students take control over using these strategies. Thus helping the students move from the observational level through the emulation level to the self-control level, and potentially to the self-regulation level.

Fisk and Hurst (2003) find paraphrasing for comprehension to be an excellent tool because it integrates all modes of communication –reading, writing, listening, and speaking –which leads to a deeper understanding of text. They state "the tie between reading and writing has long been established as an effective means of strengthening comprehension" (p.182).

They refer to a number of researchers that found paraphrasing to be effective in increasing comprehension and state that when a student can restate the main ideas in their own words this shows that they have understood the thoughts. "Paraphrasing for comprehension is an effective reading strategy that helps students process and comprehend what they are reading and learning (p. 184).

They suggest the use of a process which includes four steps:

1. Initial reading of text and discussion
2. Second reading of text with note taking
3. Written paraphrasing
4. Sharing of written paraphrasing

They further suggest that students will benefit from knowing why paraphrasing is helpful and when they will use it, implying that students take ownership and regulate the use of the paraphrasing strategy.

Fisk & Hurst (2003) express the view that paraphrasing for comprehension can be used in the teaching of upper primary and beyond. Contrasting to this view, Paris and Paris (2007) refer to the void in attention given to studying young children's comprehension skills. They suggest that despite the great body of research indicating that fluent readers be taught comprehension, there is little explanation of how these processes develop in young children and beginning readers and that 'whether it precedes or is simultaneous to their development of text decoding skills' remains less researched.

Difficulties in gaining meaning become increasingly compounded for students who are not accurate text decoders as they devote greater attention decoding at the word level. Naturally, this leads teachers to focus on decoding skills as a matter of instructional priority. Suggestions that these students might be unable to attend to comprehending whilst struggling with decoding led Moser et al (2007) to the conclusion that the nature of this relationship remains unclear.

The findings of Gray & McCutchen (2006) may offer good news to teachers wanting to teach comprehension skills to students with seemingly limiting phonological difficulties. They argue that phonological processing may not be as limiting a factor in comprehension as in word reading, despite the empirical evidence supporting the role of phonology during comprehension.

In research by Munro (2004) three comprehension strategies were trialled, one of which was paraphrasing. He concluded that teaching these strategies improves text reading in younger students. Munro suggests that his research extends the earlier work of Katim & Harris (1997) showing improved comprehension with paraphrasing at the third grade level. Munro's comprehension-paraphrasing strategy considers the cognitive nature of the learning process where students actively seek to reflect upon their learning and consider how they can use what they have learned in new tasks.

Importantly, Katims & Harris (1997) noted in their work that cognitive based learning strategies are more frequently being used to help students of all abilities improve their content comprehension. They refer to the works of Deshler & Lenz (1989, cited in Katims & Harris, 1997) who recommend that teachers and students should view instructional strategies as a vehicle for enabling students to better acquire, store, and express the information they are required to seek in the general education classroom.

The present investigation aims to examine if explicitly teaching strategies, such as paraphrasing through use of synonyms, will improve comprehension for 7-8 year old students of like decoding ability.

Method

Design

The naturalistic study used a case study OXO design and compared two groups of lower primary students, a control group and an intervention group, with similar decoding ability and low comprehension ability. Effects on content comprehension, sentence paraphrasing ability and the ability to generate and use synonyms were monitored in relation to the explicit teaching of the paraphrasing strategy.

ParticipantsStudents chosen to participate in this study were from a year one/two composite class. Their classroom teacher had identified them as suitable subjects for the intervention, based upon perceived low accuracy when asked to locate or retell text information. In comparison to peers, these students were thought to display a limited use of comprehension ability across all areas of their learning. The six students were identified as being at a similar instructional level when decoding text, based on scores of Running Record testing which takes place for all students within the regular classroom schedule. The participants details were varied and included: two students performing below their current benchmark in decoding; two students below the benchmark in decoding who also had participated in Reading Recovery the previous year; and, two younger students, considered to be performing above their benchmark for decoding.

	Age (years & months)	Gender	Grade	PM Reading Level	Other
Student A	8-3	M	2	20	Reading Recovery '07
Student B	8-0	M	2	21	Indigenous
Student C	7-4	F	1	23	
Student D	8-7	M	2	23	Reading Recovery '07
Student E	8-0	F	2	20	
Student F	7-7	M	1	22	

Materials

The students were assessed using PRT2 (Reading Progress Test 2). The Reading Progress Tests (Vincent, Crumpler, & de la Mare, 1996) measure reading comprehension using a series of seven tests for students in the age range of five to eleven. The RPT2 is made up of different types of comprehension questions which cover inferential as well as literal comprehension in continuous texts. Test tasks include; identifying the meaning of individual words, selecting the right answer from a number of choices after reading a short story, non-fiction passage or poem; choosing, or supplying, missing words in a short story or non-fiction passage. Each test has conventional cross-sectional norms which give standardized scores and reading ages, as well as ability scale scores. The ability scale score expresses a reader's attainment in reading comprehension. A scaled score of 100 represents the mid-point of the ability range measured and was useful for comparing children's ability in comprehension.

To evaluate progress in the areas of synonym use and paraphrasing ability, the Synonym Test and Paraphrasing Test (John Munro, 2007) were included in pre and post testing. Both tests were adapted to suit the lower primary students (Appendix 3). The text level selected for adapting the paraphrasing test was four levels below the students' average decoding level (Appendix 1). Words for the adapted synonym test were sourced from a junior thesaurus.

Unseen narrative texts used during the lessons and were selected from leveled sets purchased for reading instruction in the lower school (Appendix 1). The texts were well below the average decoding level of the participants and most contained around ten sentences per text. The easy decoding levels enabled the students to read with a high percentage of accuracy which facilitated their application of the paraphrasing strategy. In the final lessons, the text levels progressed towards the same level as was used for the group paraphrasing test.

Procedure

Students were informed that they were to be a part of a group to be taught a strategy which would help them with their reading and a positive climate was generated. They proceeded to undertake pre-testing, during which all students completed the RPT2 and Synonym Test as a collective group. A 45 minute block was allocated for each test. The following day the paraphrasing test was allocated 1 hour with a short break. Students were then divided into intervention and control groupings. Due to similar results in the RPT2 ability scale scores, participants were divided to give an equal mix of age, gender, decoding ability and Reading Recovery experience in each group. Lessons in the paraphrasing strategy and use of synonyms proceeded for the intervention group.

Initially, the intervention group completed a word matching activity, using key words and synonyms generated from the first text to be read (Appendix 1). This activity generated much discussion regarding the use of synonyms and developed the students' awareness of the function of synonyms. Following this, the teaching procedure was based on John Munro's (2007) Comprehension-Paraphrasing teaching strategy with an emphasis on teaching students to identify synonyms for key content words (Appendix 1).

At the beginning of each session the students revisited the reading material from the previous session, retelling the content from memory and then paraphrasing sentences read from that text. They were asked to articulate the strategy "after reading I ask myself about the words and ideas in the sentence and put it into my own sentence". They were then asked how this strategy helps them "it helps me to understand and remember the

ideas in what I am reading". They were reminded that this is a strategy often used by good readers.

Students were then introduced to a new text and took a quick flick through the pictures. Students made some spontaneous predictions at this point and then read the text. After explicit modeling of the actual task, reading of sentences proceeded, with the teacher coaching the students in identifying key words and brainstorming synonyms for these. The synonyms generated were recorded by the teacher in the initial sessions using a whiteboard. The students then attempted to paraphrase each sentence, sharing and discussing their ideas with the group before writing down the sentence in their own words.

Noting the success of individual student progress and observing the quality of their responses was an important aspect when coaching students. After the initial lessons, it quickly became apparent that the students were successfully taking on the strategy and responding well to the explicit feedback. There was no longer a need to record synonyms during brainstorming and of their own accord, the students keenly wrote down their paraphrased sentences before seeking feedback. After each lesson students reflected on what they had learned, focusing on identifying what they did not know before.

From lesson 4, students were encouraged to use a thesaurus to assist them in identifying appropriate synonyms. With guidance, the students were able to decide which words were most useful and were observed to become more independent at this skill. Positive reinforcement and explicit feedback was used to motivate and foster the quality of attempts, with the teacher still providing some cues to assist the students. These cues gradually occurred less often as the students were increasingly able complete the task independently.

During the final lessons on the more difficult text, students were asked to identify synonyms without the thesaurus and discussion centered largely around the skill of rearranging the sentence parts and increasing the amount of synonyms exploited.

Students were paraphrasing up to two or three sentences at a time. Following these lessons, the students were encouraged to consider how they might use this strategy in new tasks and contexts. They were encouraged to apply the skill during home reading and were able to identify other settings in which it might be useful.

Students in the intervention group met for 30-45 minute sessions four or five times per week. The duration of the sessions varied due to other things happening within the school. Students in the control group continued to participate in the regular classroom program. Following the intervention, all students were post-tested using the same materials and procedure used during pre-testing. Results were then analysed for gains in comprehension, the use of synonyms and ideas paraphrased.

Results

The performance for content comprehension is described in terms of student comprehension scores on the RPT2 which contains 5 continuous texts targeting literal and inferential comprehension. Individual scores from pre-testing were initially converted into Ability Scale Scores and were useful for assessing their attainment in relation to statistical norms and each other (Appendix 2).

Of the treatment group, Students A & B demonstrated an increase of 5% and 6% respectively (Figure 1). Considering that testing is different to experience of the lessons a gain for two thirds of the group is pleasing when compared to a 5% improvement by one third of students in the control group (Figure 1). When the group scores are averaged, there is no overall progress in either the control or treatment group (Figure 2), possibly reflecting that a slight difference in test conditions (change of routine due to swimming program) effected the students. Is of interest to note the higher starting score of the control group at pre-testing which fell almost 10% at post-testing (Figure 2). Thus whilst individual results look positive, the averaged comprehension results indicate little support for the hypothesis that explicitly teaching strategies, such as paraphrasing through use of synonyms, will improve comprehension in 7-8 year old students of like decoding ability.

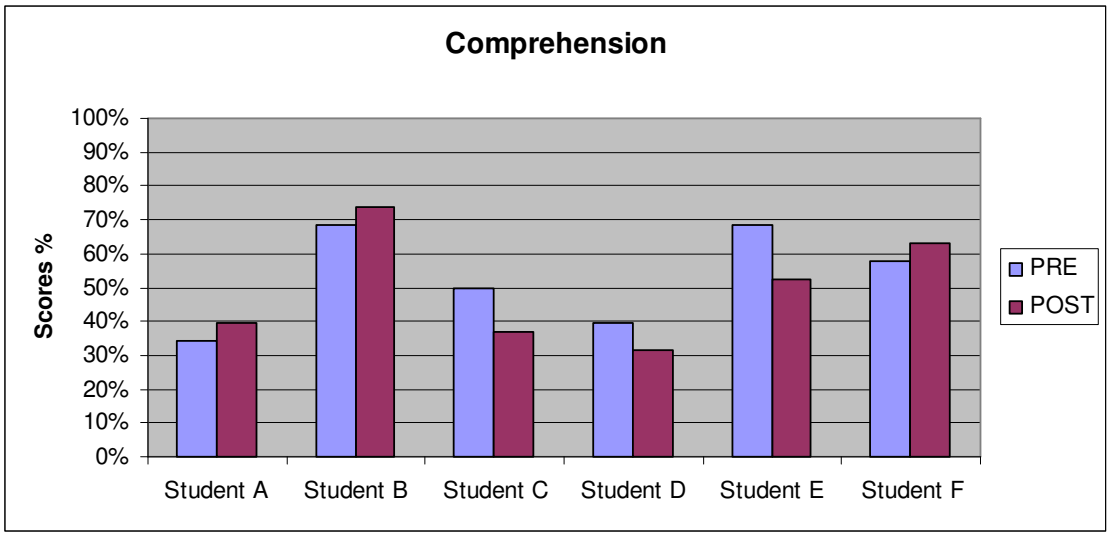

Figure 1 Individual Comprehension Results

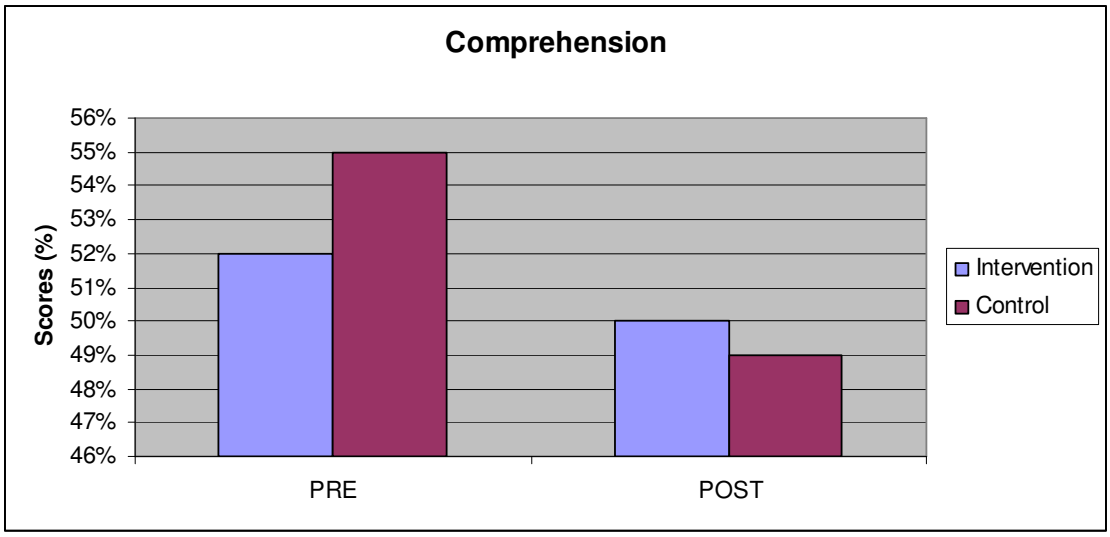

Figure 2 Group Comprehension Results

Results regarding the students' application of the paraphrasing strategy, were based on students ability to paraphrase a text sentence by sentence with written recording of attempts. Points were given for both use of synonyms and ideas paraphrased. The scores were combined and averaged to demonstrate the significant improvement of the treatment group, with an average 34% gain in their ability to paraphrase using synonyms (Figure 3).

This contrasts to the average 0% gain made by the control group, where Student D improved from 24% to 29%, Student E from 38% to 44% and Student F 26% to 15%.

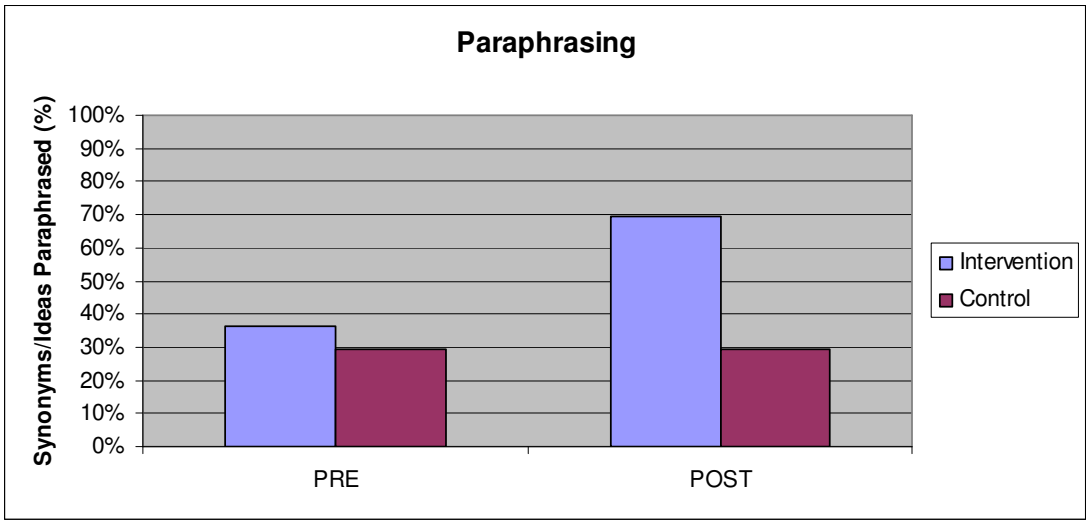

Figure 3 Average Paraphrasing Results

Student A is considered at risk for both decoding and comprehension. He has benefited from Reading Recovery, although was unable to maintain the elevated reading level in the 12 months after Reading Recovery ceased. Student A is a very creative student who is often distracted during learning tasks. Indicators of Student A's progress included observation of an increasing resourcefulness during brainstorming sessions. His synonym suggestions demonstrated a more sophisticated vocabulary than that observed in his writing and usual speech. During paraphrasing Student A was most successful in creatively rearranging sentence parts and was able to impressively incorporate appropriate synonyms and ideas not mentioned during the brainstorm. His paraphrasing attempts and exploitation of synonymity were observed to be semantically correct in most cases. After explicit teaching in the use of synonyms and paraphrasing Student A's results were pleasing. His post-score result in comprehension showed an improvement of 5% (Figure 1) although it was apparent that his decoding skills were impeding his ability to read the passages in both the pre and post-testing testing. He improved his ability to generate synonyms by 17% on the Synonym Test (Figure 4) and his paraphrasing improved by 39% (Figure

5).

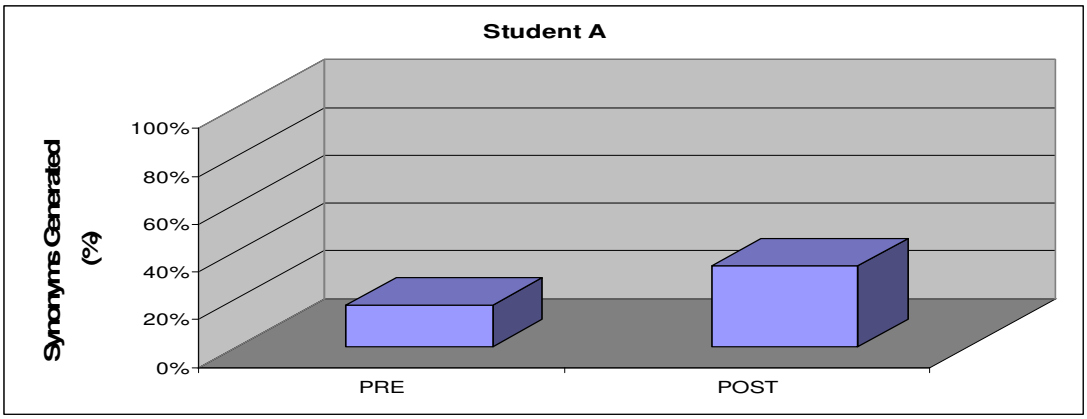

Figure 4 Synonyms Generated by Student A

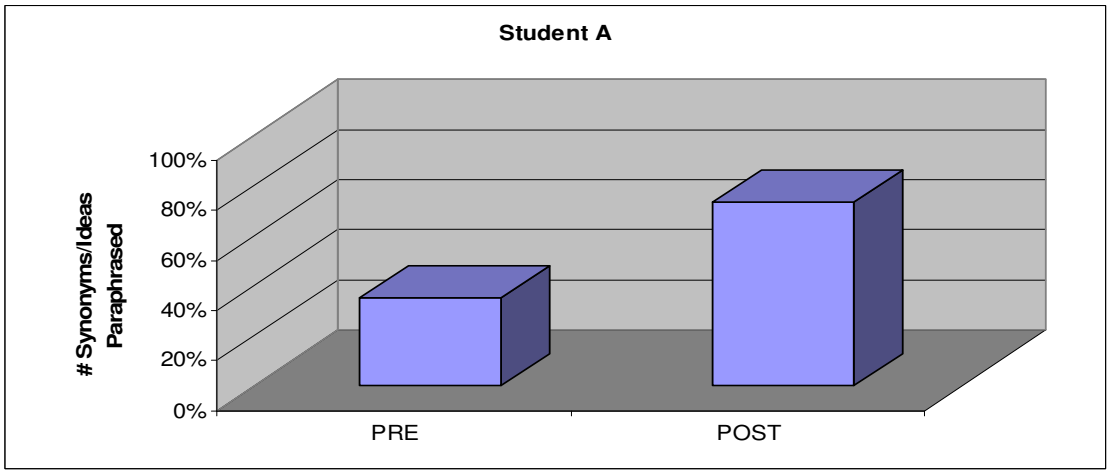

Figure 5 Synonyms/Ideas Paraphrased by Student A

Student B demonstrated a keen mind and an tendency towards the verbose which impeded his progress in the initial sessions. With specific feedback Student B was observed to regulate his behaviour and tune into the specifics of the task. By the third session he was able to correctly exploit synonyms and was more often considering the best synonym rather than shouting random guesses. Further, he less often lost the meaning of the sentence or fell into the habit of extending it with his own ideas and assumptions. Student B was observed to use incorrect grammatical structures when paraphrasing, however this was in line with his usual speech and his indigenous heritage may be of consideration. Individual comprehension results for Student B improved by

6% (Figure 1). Student B increased his ability to generate synonyms significantly as the sessions progressed, often quickly contributing the most responses during brainstorming. His ability to generate synonyms increased by 41% (Figure 6) the most of any participant. His paraphrasing improved 39% (Figure 7). Very pleasing results overall.

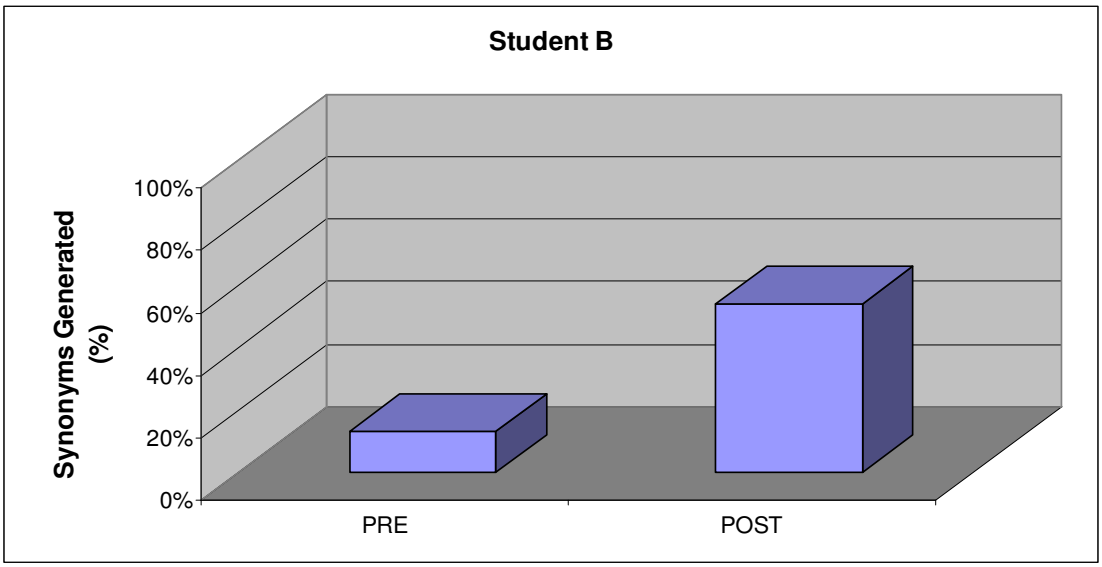

Figure 6 Synonyms Generated by Student B

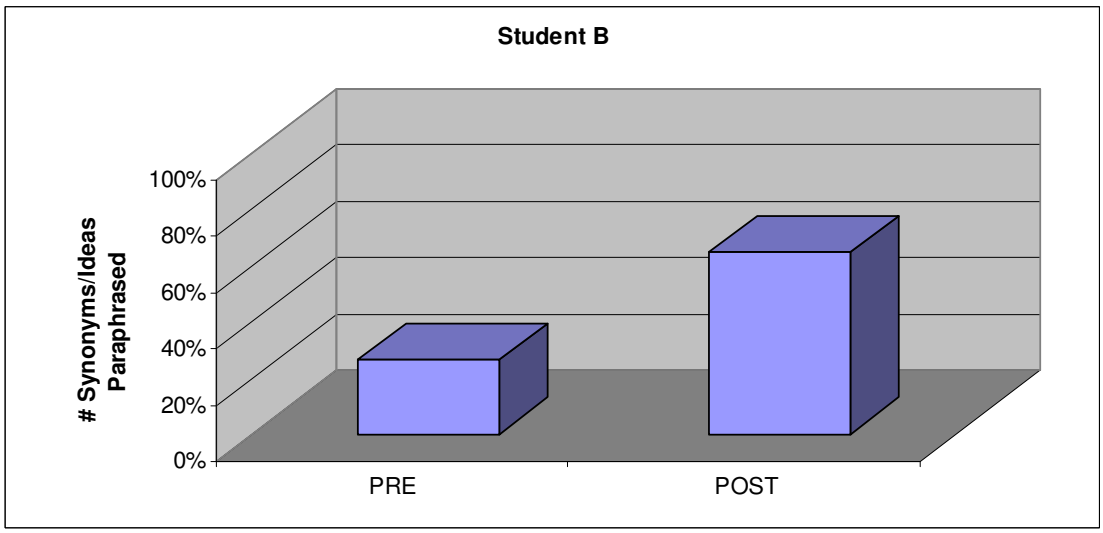

Figure 7 Synonyms/Ideas Paraphrased by Student B

For student C, improvements in the ability to paraphrase and exploit synonymity did not appear to transfer during comprehension post-testing. However it was noted she showed a distinct lack of enthusiasm for the post-test and she commented that she did not want to

do the test having already done it previously. She appeared to rush the test and this could have contributed to her lack of gain in this area. Her comprehension result showed a decrease of 13% (Figure 1). It was observed during the teaching sessions that she demonstrated a reluctance to make mistakes. This was initially a barrier to progress, but was overcome with scaffolding and she was soon able to give some successful responses and began to enjoy the lessons. She was able to identify key several words per sentence although she seemed more comfortable changing only one word per sentence when paraphrasing. During sessions 8-10 she was able to increase her use of synonyms when paraphrasing in direct response to positive reinforcement. Her post-testing scores in use of synonyms and paraphrasing were pleasing, with a 26% increase in the ability to generate synonyms (Figure 8) and an increase of 24% in paraphrasing (Figure 9).

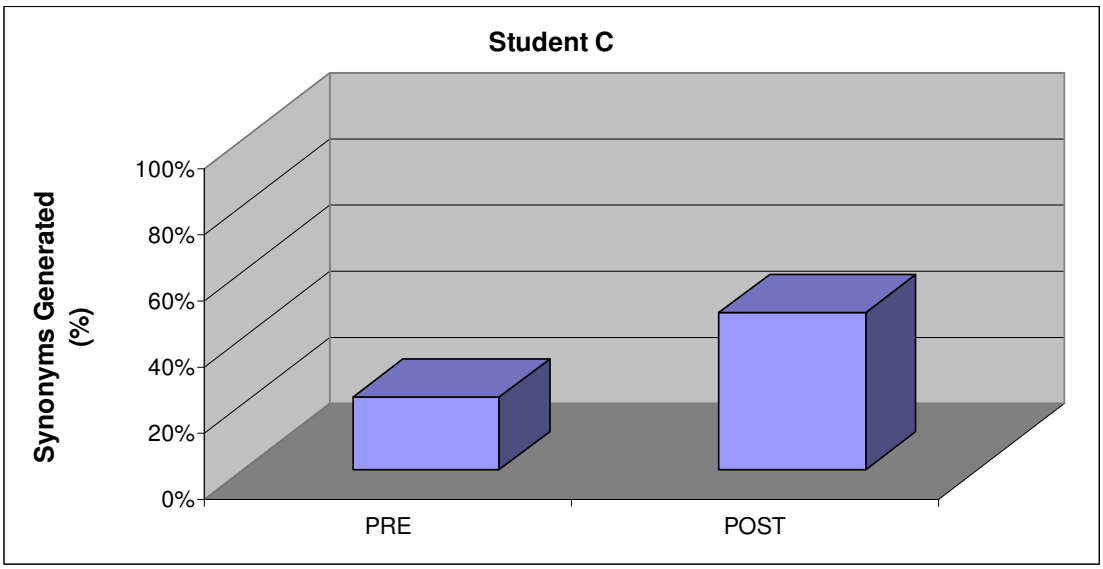

Figure 8 Synonyms Generated by Student C

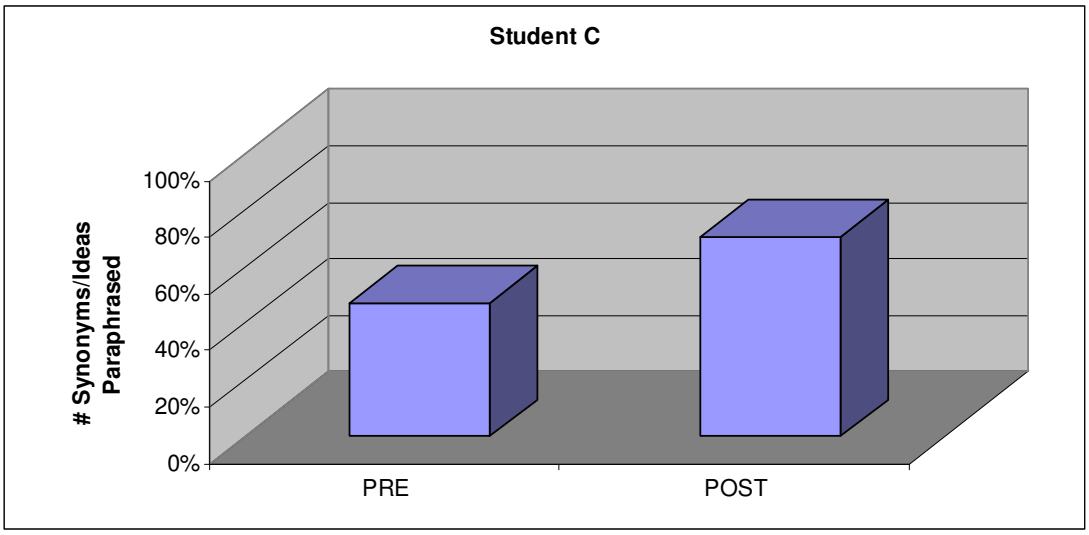

Figure 9 Synonyms/Ideas Paraphrased by Student C

The combined scores for synonym use demonstrated that overall there was an average 28% gain made by the intervention group in their ability to generate synonyms. This compares favourably to the average 12% gain made by the control group, where Student D increased from 24% to 29%, Student E 38% to 44% and Student F decreased from 26% to 15% (Appendix 2).

The treatment group included Student A, a Reading Recovery participant, Student B who had tested below the lower primary benchmark for 2 years and Student C who is a year younger than the other participants, yet it is of interest to note that each of the students was able to improve significantly at both generating synonyms and paraphrasing using synonyms.

Discussion

The investigation aimed to examine if explicitly teaching strategies, such as paraphrasing through use of synonyms, would improve comprehension for 7-8 year old students of like decoding ability. Individual results reflected improvement in two thirds of participants in the treatment group in the area of comprehension. Further, the results based on the Paraphrasing and Synonym Tasks clearly indicated that students had improved in the use

of these comprehension strategies. Whilst the treatment groups' average comprehension results for the Reading Progress Test (RPT2) did not directly support the hypothesis, it is worth highlighting the possibility that, RPT2 post-test results may have been compromised (for participants in both groups) by the changed routine on that day. This is to be expected in a naturalistic study taking place in a busy classroom schedule. Aspects were supported in the broader results of the study, related to the beneficial nature of explicitly teaching strategies. The treatment group averaged a 34% increase in the use of strategies, significant when compared to 0% average difference in the control group. Thus gains in the specific task of paraphrasing through the use of synonyms were achieved through explicit teaching of lower primary students.

These findings support literature by Fisk & Hurst, (2003); Paris & Paris, (2007); Katims & Harris, (1997); Munro, (2004) and Parker, & Hurry, (2007) which advocate the importance of explicitly supporting students as they seek to comprehend text and to become actively engaged in attempting to interpret what they read. The nature of the teaching in the present study was explicit and encouraged the students to make meaning whilst reading. Feedback from the parent of Student A suggested that he was applying the paraphrasing technique at home and when queried on this, told her it was "ok to do it".

Of particular interest, were the results of Students A and B, who experience real difficulties in decoding and fluency and tested quite a way below their school benchmark reading level for two years running. To their credit, all of the highest gains in the three skills tested were achieved by these students. The explicit teaching of the comprehension strategy was beneficial despite their limitations. This was similar to the findings of research into the teaching of struggling readers conducted by Horner & O'Conner (1997), who assert that the goal of education today is to teach children to become self-directed learners who seek to acquire new information and to master their own skills and that this is true for struggling readers also. The present study mirrors that struggling readers are able to respond well with appropriate guidance. The text levels were found to be

appropriate and the intervention was also deemed age appropriate according to the increases in results in the treatment group.

For educators, this study implies that the use of a teaching style influenced by a cognitive model is an effective method for accelerating the learning and application of comprehension strategies by lower primary readers. The adapted Comprehension-Paraphrasing Stratey (Munro, 2007) was based upon a model that considered the responsibilities of both the teacher and the student and in this way encouraged students to take ownership of the strategy. It is apparent in the present study that the intervention would need to take place over an extended period of time to bring about significant changes in self-regulation, however the trends indicated in the results are positive.

For these students, paraphrasing it is an effective tool to add to their repertoire of classroom practices. Views that fit with the findings of Fisk & Hurst (2003).

Several considerations come to mind upon reflection of this investigation. In particular the use of anecdotal evidence was chosen to monitor individual development during the course of lessons in this study. Whilst proving a useful indicator during the course of the investigation, it would have been more accurate to give a numerical value to the number of synonyms used by the participants in each lesson. A further consideration is ensuring ongoing benefits for the students, due to the short time frame of the intervention, continued development in the use of the paraphrasing strategy will need to be embedded future instruction. Influencing students to use the skill during personal and home-reading is another aspect of this goal.

It was noticed during testing that students did not refer back to the text when answering questions. In retrospect, extracting sentences and paragraphs from continuous during the lessons text may have improved RPT2 results as the testing format was quite different to the lesson content. They seemed to be especially limited when a question required them to use inferential comprehension and further intervention is required in this area. Despite being age appropriate, some students indicated they were having problems decoding the

text in the RPT2. In future it might be useful to use a testing tool such as PROBE (Prose Reading Observation, Behaviour and Evaluation of Comprehension). PROBE reading assessment (Parkin, Parkin & Pool, 2002) includes assessment of reading accuracy and comprehension skills.

Further reflection of the current study relates to text choice. The use of both fiction and non-fiction would provide valuable insights and varied application of this strategy for participants. Whilst it is apparent that the current study would have benefited from the opportunity for further lessons, it leads to the conclusion that a future area for intervention could focus on self-regulating the use of the paraphrasing strategy when reading a variety of text types for a variety of purposes.

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Session One
Comprehension-Paraphrasing Strategy (Munro, 2007) adapted

Text: The Window Garden.
Let's flick through the pictures to see what the book is about.

Synonyms Activity:
In this activity we will match words. Try to match the words so that they mean the same thing. For example: in the sentence: 'that is a large house', another word for large might be big, enormous or roomy. Large would match with big, enormous or roomy because they mean the same thing.

Synonym Match Activity (Provide words on large cards.)
Children briefly discuss or explain why they matched each set.

make - create	put - place	write - draw	sticks - wood
need - use	sister - she	name - type	by – next to
seen - noticed	walking - moving		

Introduce the Strategy:
I am going to teach you something you can do that will help you to remember what you read. This is what you do. When you read a sentence, talk about the ideas in the sentence and then say the sentence in your own words.

Teacher models paraphrasing and scaffolds student activity:

- *We will read the sentence together. What is the idea in this sentence?* Discuss ideas and details.
- *Let's practice changing some of the words.* Students brainstorm synonyms for the selected word, e.g. make: create, build, prepare etc.
- *Now we will say it in our own words.* Teacher models and then scaffolds as students practice the strategy. Each student records their sentence.

Teacher reviews the action: *Let's think about what we did here. We read the sentence and asked ourselves about the ideas and details. Then, to help us remember the ideas, we put the sentence into our own words.*

Do you have any questions?

Students practice: *Let's do this together with another sentence.*
Students read together and are guided to practice the strategy.

Teacher reviews the action: *What did you do today?* "Read the sentence, asked ourselves questions about the main ideas, changed the sentence into our own words."

Lessons Two - Ten

Lesson Structure	Lesson in Detail
Previous Text Retelling	Students retell details they remember about the text from the previous session.
Previous Text Rereading	Shared rereading of the text. Teacher cues use of paraphrasing and guides students to change key words. "*How would you say it another way"* In turn, each student reads a sentence and then retells it in her/his own words.
Articulating the strategy	Students say the paraphrasing strategy before they begin to read: *"after reading I ask myself about the words and ideas in the sentence and put it into my own sentence".*
Introducing Text	Students briefly discuss the pictures in the new text making predictions or comments.
Text Reading	Students begin to read the sentences together. Students are guided to discuss key content words and ideas for each sentence.
▪ **Brainstorm Synonyms** ▪ **Paraphrase** ▪ **Write and Discuss.**	Students brainstorm synonyms for selected key content words, discarding words that do not match semantically. Students are prompted to paraphrase the sentence and write down their new sentence. Share and discuss sentences providing specific feedback.
Reflection	Students review the actions taken in the lesson and articulate why they are using the strategy. *"It helps me to understand and remember the ideas in what I am reading".*

Adapted from John Munro Comprehension-Paraphrasing Strategy (2007)

Texts Used

Lesson	Text	Genre	Series	Level
1	The Window Garden	Fictional Procedure	*Essentials A*	10
2	Which Plants?	Narrative	*Essentials A*	10
3	Where Is My Pizza?	Narrative	*Essentials A*	10
4	The Street Parade	Fictional Recount	*Essentials A*	10
5	The Frog Princess	Narrative	*Essentials B*	13
6 7	Grandpas Cup of Tea	Narrative	*Essentials B*	13
8 9 10	The Wolf and the Old Woman	Narrative	Voyages *Forging Ahead*	18

Adapted text for Paraphrasing Task

Pre-testing Post-testing	Prickles the Porcupine	Narrative	PM PLUS	19

Synonyms Task
Student Form

Student name: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

1	**small**	
2	**fast**	
3	**old**	
4	**leave**	
5	**car**	
6	**shoe**	
7	**child**	
8	**fat**	
9	**walk**	
10	**cat**	
11	**angry**	
12	**bad**	
13	**big**	
14	**swim**	
15	**hot**	
16	**hit**	
17	**gentle**	
18	**eat**	
19	**jump**	
20	**wind**	
21	**smooth**	
22	**story**	
23	**loud**	
24	**fall**	
25	**climb**	
26	**cold**	
27	**mess**	
28	**vegetable**	
29	**clothes**	

Adapted from Synonym Task, John Munro (2008)

Synonyms Task: Target words and possible responses
Teacher Form

	Target Word	Possible correct responses
1	small	tiny, little, wee, mini, miniature, short, shrimp, slight, stunted, teensy, minor, trifling
2	fast	quick, rapid, brisk, snappy, speedy, hasty, swift
3	old	aged, ancient, elderly, experienced, geriatric, senior, veteran, outdated, stale
4	leave	go, clear out, scram, stop
5	car	vehicle, automobile, sedan
6	shoe	boot, slipper, runners, sneaker
7	child	boy, girl, infant, tot, baby, youngster, brat, kid, kiddie, toddler
8	fat	rotund, plump, overweight, burly, corpulent, obese, oversize, paunchy, portly, stout, blubbery, bulk, lard
9	walk	stroll, amble, hike, march, pathway, amble, tramp
10	cat	kitten, moggy, puss, leopard, lion, tabby
11	angry	annoyed, grumpy, mad, furious, fed up, fuming, cross
12	bad	awful, cruel, evil, nasty, naughty, terrible, unfair, wicked
13	big	fat, giant, great, heavy, huge, large, long, massive, monstrous, tall
14	swim	float, paddle, surf, wade, bathe, back-stroke, body surf, glide
15	hot	blazing, burning, fiery, humid, roasting, scalding, warm
16	hit	attack, beat, belt, bash, pound, punch, slap, smack, strike
17	gentle	kind, meek, peaceful, placid, nice, quiet, sweet, thoughtful
18	eat	bite, chew, crunch, gobble, bulp, nibble, swallow, taste, chew
19	jump	bob, bounce, hop, leap, pounce, spring, trampoline, vault
20	wind	air, blow, breeze, gust, puff, willy-willy, breeze, storm
21	smooth	clean, even, flat, shiny, sleek, glossy
22	story	tale, account, fairy tale, legend, narrative
23	loud	blaring, deafening, noisy, thunderous, roaring, shrill
24	fall	drop, descend, dive, plunge, flop, slip, topple, trip, tumble
25	climb	go up, clamber, mount, rise, scale, soar, ascend, scamper, scurry
26	cold	chilly, icy, frosty, freezing, bleak, snowy, wintry, fresh, frozen
27	mess	untidy, dirty, chaos, shambles, jumble, clutter
28	vegetable	broccoli, carrots, sweetcorn, onions, leeks, peas, potatoes
29	clothes	trousers, suit, shorts, coat, jacket, dress, shirt, jeans, t-shirt

Adapted from Synonym Task, John Munro (2008)

Paraphrasing Task
Adapted for Lower Primary

Student name: _____ Grade: ____ Date: _____

Sentence	Teacher	Your try
A toy maker went to live in another city	This person who makes toys moved to a new town.	
He wanted to find a place to live.		

	Your Sentences
The creature crept out from under the leaves.	
He had been sleeping all day.	
The creature was very hungry.	
He loved to eat the green leaves that grew on the tall trees.	
He scuttled along the ground.	
Soon he came to one of his favourite trees.	
The creature climbed up, until he came to a long branch.	

Right at the end of the branch he could see some new green leaves.	
They looked delicious!	
The creature moved carefully along the branch.	
The leaves that he wanted seemed to be a long way out.	
He had never been this far out on a branch before.	
The creature stopped a minute and looked down.	
He saw a fox sniffing around in the dry leaves.	
He felt safe up in the tree away from the fox.	
The creature kept crawling along the branch towards the leaves.	
Suddenly he heard a loud SNAP! The branch was breaking!	

Adapted from Paraphrase Task, John Munro (2008)

Table 1 Comparison of Comprehension Pre-Test and Post Test

Comprehension RPT2									
		PRE				POST			
	Chron. Age y m	Raw Score	Raw Score (%)	Stand. Score	Reading Age y m	Raw Score	Raw Score (%)	Stand. Score	Reading Age y m
Student A	8-3	13	34%	86	7-4	15	39%	100	7-5
Student B	8-0	26	68%	105	8-10	28	74%	109	9-0
Student C	7-4	19	50%	103	8-0	14	37%	99	7-5
Average		**19.3**	**51%**			**19**	**50%**		
Student D	8-7	15	39%	86	7-5	12	32%	98	8-3
Student E	8-0	26	68%	105	8-10	20	53%	104	7-6
Student F	7-7	22	58%	104	8-4	24	63%	106	8-6
Average		**21**	**55%**			**18.7**	**49%**		

Table 2 Comparison of Paraphrasing Pre-test and Post-test

Paraphrasing						
		PRE	POST		PRE	POST
	Possible	34	34		100%	100%
	Student A	12	25		35%	74%
	Student B	9	22		26%	65%
Intervention	**Student C**	16	24		47%	71%
				Average	**36%**	**70%**
	Student D	8	10		24%	29%
	Student E	13	15		38%	44%
Control	**Student F**	9	5		26%	15%
				Average	**29%**	**29%**

Table 3 Comparison of Synonym Pre-test and Post test

Synonyms				
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
Student A	25	49	17%	34%
Student B	19	78	13%	54%
Student C	32	69	22%	48%
Student D	18	44	12%	30%
Student E	38	54	26%	37%
Student F	44	54	30%	37%