

Explicit teaching of paraphrasing and use of synonyms to Grade Three students will improve comprehension at the whole text level.

Abstract

Reading is multi faceted; it requires an approach of decoding to determine the words and then thinking about these words to construct meaning. Because reading is more than decoding words, students need to be able use a range of strategies that help them make sense of the text they are reading in terms of the world around them. Readers need to monitor their understanding and explicit instruction is needed to teach all elements of reading, Students need a repertoire of comprehension strategies such as, visualizing, asking questions or inferring. When students acquire this repertoire they are able to solve comprehension problems with words, sentences or overall meaning.

Paraphrasing is one strategy that can be taught to help students' manage their own reading activity. The hypothesis of this study is to investigate if explicit teaching of paraphrasing and use of synonyms to Grade Three students will improve comprehension at the whole text level. An acronym was used as a prompt to use this strategy before, during and after reading: The acronym was RAP: **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 (Schumaker, Denton & Dreshler, 1984).

This study compared two groups (control and teaching). The teaching group was explicitly taught the paraphrasing strategy using synonyms. Both groups were pre and post-tested using the 'Group administration Synonym and Paraphrasing tests' (Munro, 2005) and the TORCH (2003) comprehension test.

Results support the hypothesis as the overall effect size shows a substantial growth in all three-post tests of the teaching group. There was an overall positive impact on the students' general comprehension. The implication from this research is that there is enough evidence to develop a more cohesive and systematic approach to the teaching of reading strategies across all grade levels at our school.

Introduction

The purpose of reading never changes, it is always about understanding what has been read. When readers focus solely on decoding, meaning takes a back seat. Readers have to learn that reading is an interactive process involving decoding words and constructing meaning of the text. Teachers need to teach students to become more active, strategic readers as well as being proficient decoders. Within Catholic schools throughout Victoria, there is an expectation that all children by the end of Grade Two will be able to satisfactorily decode a text at Level 28. While most students achieve this level there is no emphasis or mandatory testing on the child's level of understanding at this text level. (Wolley, 2008) states that teachers focus on word-level processing skills, as a single indicator of reading ability and that this is too limited. This view leads to an inadequate assessment of reading comprehension difficulties.

Considerable time is dedicated to teaching decoding strategies in the early years of schooling to the detriment of gaining meaning of the overall text. There are many factors that contribute to reading success. The 'multiple levels of text processing' (MLOPT) model, (Munro, 1985; cited in Munro 2010) demonstrates that when we read we process the text at a number of levels. The word, sentence, conceptual, topic and dispositional level come under the umbrella of 'Literacy Knowledge'. There is the level of 'Metacognitive Knowledge', oral language and experiential knowledge, which is under 'Existing Knowledge', and then there is the 'Sensory level'. The levels are not static, they are interchangeable and throughout the process of learning to read we need to assess that the children have grasped each and every level. Students need to be taught about structural text features and a variety of reading strategies. The value of using each level during the reading process, (the why and how) at each level assists the reading process and must be explicitly taught.

As (Westwood, 2001) noted, students do not learn to read by osmosis. All students need to be taught the necessary skills and strategies to identify words and make meaning from texts. High quality instruction is required. Strategy training should be an essential part of any balanced approach to literacy. (Gee, 1998) puts forth the notion that not all readers automatically acquire strategies and that explicit instruction is required. Strategy-oriented approaches focus on helping students think about reading in ways that enhance learning and understanding. Each strategy is designed to open up new worlds for the child. The approach includes both cognitive (what goes on in a person's head) and behavioral (what the person actually does) elements that guide student performance and their evaluation of the task (Katmis& Harris, 1997). Teachers must ensure that student's are curious, engaged and interested so that they are motivated to become not only better readers, but thoughtful, critical and independent.

The purpose of comprehension instruction is to teach strategies as tools to expand and deepen understanding. Students need to compose meaning in their minds; as they read they activate their thinking and relate to the author on many levels. Teachers need to teach readers to be disposed to think about their reading as they read. They need to become strategic, reflective learners (Harvey and Goudis, 2007). Studies have provided substantial evidence that explicit comprehension instruction improves students' understanding of texts that are read (Harvey and Goudis, 2007).

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effects of teaching cognitive strategies to readers and test to ascertain if this will enhance the overall reading comprehension of the students. (Hattie, 2009) supports this notion by using Rowe (1995) research that found that reading programs that had a dominant focus on processing strategies produced higher effects ($d= 1.04$) than did text programs ($d= 0.77$) and task programs ($d= 0.69$). It indicates that this type of awareness supports the teaching of specific reading comprehension strategies. It is a strategic process that requires students to actively construct meaning from text (Katmis & Harris, 1997). Teachers need to teach students comprehension strategies cumulatively throughout the child's school life. There are many strategies such as visualizing, making connections, inferring or determining the main idea. This action research examines the effects of teaching paraphrasing using synonyms on the students overall comprehension of a text .The school where the research is being conducted does not have a systematic approach to the teaching of these strategies and Grade Three children have not been taught this specific strategy.

Paraphrasing for comprehension is an excellent tool for reinforcing reading skills such as identifying the main idea, finding supporting details and identifying the author's voice. One of the reasons paraphrasing for comprehension works so well is that it encompasses all areas of communication: reading and writing, listening and speaking. It is an effective way of reinforcing comprehension. (Fisk & Hurst, 2003). " Students who experience the integration of writing and reading are likely to learn more content, to understand it better and to remember it longer" (Vacca & Vacca, 1999; cited in Fisk & Hurst, 2003). Paraphrasing is not a word for word translation nor is it a retell. It concentrates on expressing main ideas. Students support this idea by using their own words. The meaning and voice of the original author must be maintained. If the original text is passionate or humorous then the paraphrase must be as well. The students must identify the authors voice before beginning the process of paraphrasing (Fisk & Hurst, 2003).

An acronym has been taught to students in order to trigger or activate their inner, cognitive dialogues and to have them think about and actively apply the steps in this particular strategy (Katmis & Harris, 1997). The acronym RAP has been used: **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. (Schumaker, Denton & Dreshler, 1984). The ten lessons are based on teaching the paraphrasing strategy. Synonyms are used to scaffold comprehension by building up vocabulary.

The hypothesis for this research is to investigate if 'Explicit teaching of paraphrasing and use of synonyms to Grade Three students will improve comprehension at the whole text level.'

Method

Design

The study uses a naturalistic design in the context of a real classroom. Explicit teaching of paraphrasing and the use of synonyms were taught to a class group with the aim of improving their comprehension. This group was compared with a controlled group with both classes undergoing three pre and post-test assessments.

Participants

The participants chosen for this study are Grade Three children of mixed ability. Both the teaching group and control group are within a Grade Three and Four-classroom setting. The person conducting this research teaches neither of these classes. For the purposes of this study the data of the 14 students in the teaching group and the 12 students in the control group is used. The Grade Three students were chosen as this is the transition year from the Junior years into the Middle years and there has not been an emphasis on explicit teaching of comprehension strategies in the Prep to Grade Two years at this school. All of the children's consent forms were completed and returned.

As shown in Table 1 & 2 the children from the teaching group and the control group are of similar age and all in their fourth year of schooling. There are nine boys and five girls in the teaching group and five boys and seven girls in the control group. One child in the teaching group has had reading recovery and three in the control group.

The reason why the group was chosen for teaching was that the overall reading level was slightly down and the previous years' PAT-R (Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading: Comprehension, 2008) test showed that their comprehension level was lower. Although PAT-R is used as an assessment, there is no specific emphasis to teach comprehension strategies in Grade Two. This data is displayed in Table 1 & 2. There are no ESL children in either class.

Table 1
Participants in Teacher Group

**Teaching
Group**

Name	Age in MONTHS	Gender	Years at School	Grade One RR *	Reading Level FEB-'10	PAT- R Gr 2 (25) NOV-'09	Attendance Number of sessions
A	07.11.2001	M	4		27	16	8
B	23.01.2001	M	4		28	21	10
C	3.11.2001	M	4		28	15	10
D	30.09.2001	M	4		28	20	10
E	21.05.2001	F	4	*	27	7	10
F	17.06.2001	F	4		28	21	10
G	11.07.2001	M	4		27	6	8
H	10.08.2001	F	4		28	14	8
I	16.08.2001	M	4		27	8	10
J	20.7.2001	M	4		28	N/A	9
K	14.03.2002	F	4		28	16	10
L	27.09.2001	M	4		28	20	10
M	12.11.2001	F	4		28	22	8
N	3.05.2001	M	4		27	9	9

Table 2
Participants in Control Group

**Control
Group**

Name	Age in MONTHS	Gender	Years at School	Grade One RR *	Reading Level Feb '10	PAT-R GR 2- (25) Nov' 09	No. of sessions
A	10.10.2001	M	4	*	28	14	N/A
B	05.08.2001	F	4		28	22	N/A
C	07.11.2001	F	4		27	14	N/A
D	22.06.2001	F	4	*	28	16	N/A
E	08.07.2001	F	4		28	23	N/A
F	18.03.2002	M	4		28	24	N/A
G	05.06.2001	M	4	*	28	15	N/A
H	27.06.2001	M	4		28	20	N/A
I	16.01.2002	F	4		28	25	N/A
J	11.09.2001	F	4		27	12	N/A
K	19.04.2001	F	4		27	14	N/A
L	31.07.2001	M	4		28	17	N/A

Materials

All the children involved in the study were pre and post tested. The tests were given within a normal classroom structure and both groups were given the same allocation of time to complete them. One test a day was administered over three days.

- The TORCH (2003) test of ‘Grasshoppers’- non-fiction, grade three appropriate was used to assess their overall comprehension. The allocated time was 45 minutes after the practice questions were completed. ‘Grasshoppers’ was given for both the pre and post-test.
- John Munro’s Paraphrasing task: Group administration (2005). The allocated time for the test was 45 minutes, after the practice questions were completed.
- The Synonym task: Group administration (2005). After the practice questions were completed the allocated time for the test was 1 minute per word. The target word was read out and then all the children were given the allocated time and then the next word was read out. This time limit was given so that there was a consistent approach across both of the grades.

Throughout the lessons electronic and hard copy stories were used:

Stories

- Aesop Fables, ‘The Bet Between Wind and Sun’ and ‘The Hare and the Tortoise’.
- The NAPLAN Reading Magazine 2008 and 2009.
- RAP poster (Schumaker, Denton & Dreshler)
- CLOZE: Year 3 Comprehension Checkpoint
- CLOZE: e:lit

Other Resources

- Smart Kids: Synonym Matching Game
- Dictionaries and Thesaurus’s

The resources that were used for each lesson are listed at the end of the lesson plans in Appendix 1.

Procedure

The teaching group consisted of the fourteen Grade Three students whose data was collected and nine Grade Four students. This group was explicitly taught paraphrasing strategies using synonyms in a series of ten lessons given over a two-week period. The researcher taught the lessons, not the classroom teacher. The lessons were in the morning Literacy block between 10.15am and 11.00am. The first lesson was for 45 minutes and the remaining nine lessons were for 40 minutes.

The initial lessons targeted the sentence level and then moved onto paragraphs and the concepts within these, incorporating the elements from the MLOPT model of reading (Munro, 1985; cited in Munro 2010). The structure of the lessons adhered to the ‘Framework for Explicit Instruction Focused Literacy Lessons’ (Munro, 2010) using the headings of: Introduction, Elaboration, Practice and Review. The lessons and the structure is included in Appendix 1.

Throughout the lessons the modes of proximal development was used with close attention to the Colin’s model of teaching when assisting students (Munro 2010). The John Munro comprehension strategies- paraphrasing guide for classroom teaching helped frame the daily lessons (Munro, 2010). Each lesson was planned daily and set

up according to the accomplishments of the previous lesson. Each lesson was reviewed at the start of the lesson in the introduction section. The students were taken through the activities alternating between whole group, small groups, pairs and individually. Any group work was always of mixed ability. The teacher determined whether the student was using the strategy by having conversations with them, reading the written responses and observation of each individual student.

The RAP acronym, made into a poster, was used to assist with paraphrasing from Lesson 3 onwards. The poster acronym read:

Read the text

Ask your self some questions about the main idea and details

Put the main ideas and details into your own words. Try to change as many words as you can- using synonyms.

(Refer to Appendix 1.)

The ten lessons explicitly taught paraphrasing and the use of synonyms to improve the overall comprehension at the text level. The data gained from the pre and post testing of paraphrasing, synonyms and TORCH (Tests of Reading Comprehension) have been compared to quantify the changes and improvements in the group. The control group's data enables a comparison to be made between intervention and no intervention.

Results

The overall effect of the explicit teaching of paraphrasing and the use of synonyms can be seen in Figure 1 showing the effect size of the teacher group and control group. The growth of the teaching group can be clearly seen in the differences between the two groups. This graph indicates a substantial growth in all areas of the teaching group that was tested.

The Synonym area shows the greatest growth of 1.82 in the Teacher group compared to the Control group of 0.5.

The Paraphrasing area shows a growth of 1.35 in the Teacher group compared to the Control group of 0.2.

The overall comprehension test, the TORCH scale score shows a growth in the Teacher group of 0.6 compared to the Control group of 0.4.

Hattie (2009) for educational outcomes determines $d= 0.2$ as small, $d= 0.4$ as medium and $d= 0.6$ as large effect size. There is growth in both groups but the size of the growth in the teacher group is more substantial.

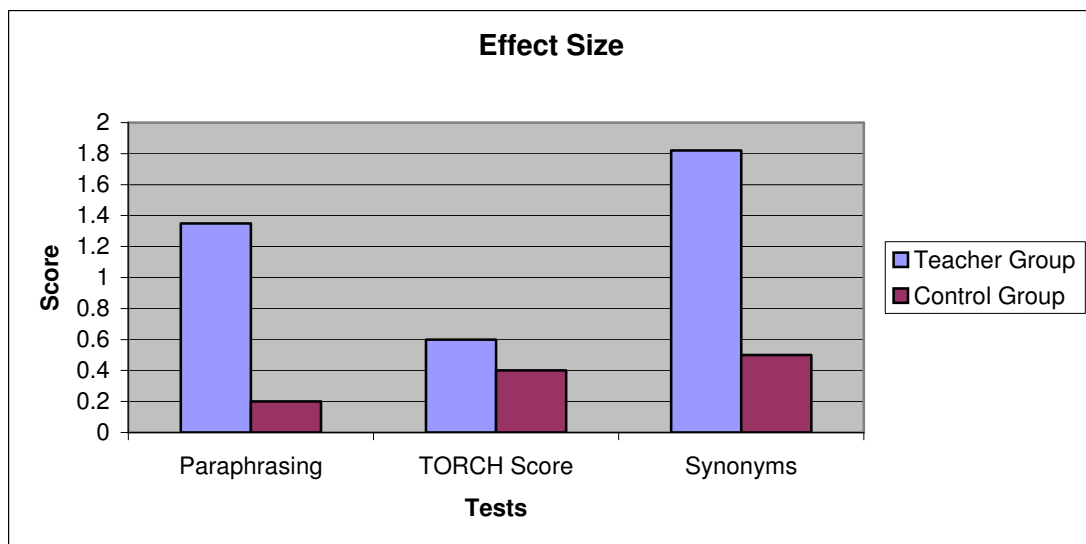


Figure 1: Effect size comparison in graph form between Teacher and Control Group

Figures 2, 3 & 4 demonstrate that the Teacher group and Control group were fairly evenly matched with their pre test average scores.

In the Paraphrasing pre test the average score for the Teacher group was 18.07 compared to the Control group at 18.08.

The teacher group in the TORCH Scale Score was slightly higher with an average score of 38.2 and control at 35.9.

The average score in the Synonyms pre test for the teacher group was 57.5 and for the control group it was 55.9.

The growth size for both groups is apparent in Figure 1.

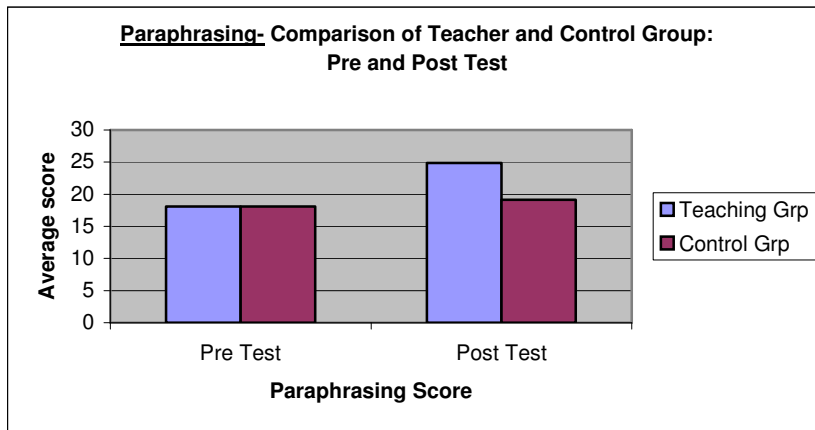


Figure 2

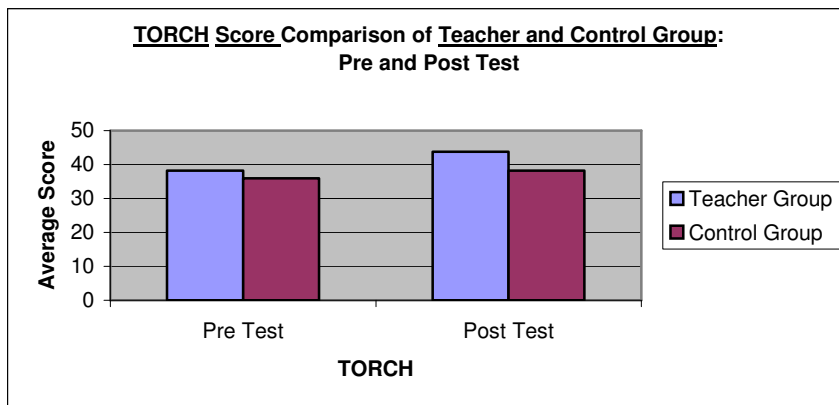


Figure 3

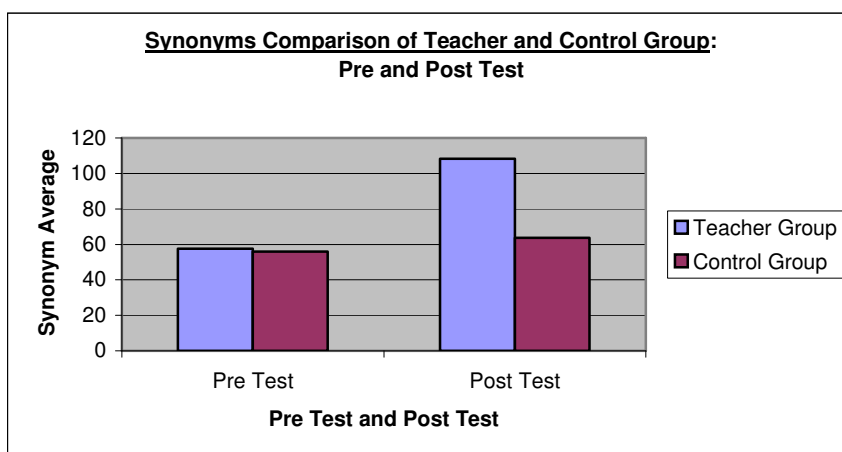


Figure 4

Table 3: Pre and Post Test Scores for Teacher Group

Teaching Group	Para PRE	Para POST	TORCH raw PRE	TORCH raw POST	TORCH scale Score PRE	TORCH scale score POST	Syn PRE	Syn POST	
A	15	25	13	17	35	47	45	76	
B	24	27	16	19	48	58	118	156	
C	25	28	13	15	35	40	68	122	
D	23	27	18	17	52	46	82	136	
E	8	20	10	14	29	37	32	77	
F	24	28	15	16	40	42	86	144	
G	10	22	7	12	24	33	19	78	
H	19	25	16	17	42	46	52	100	
I	16	20	13	16	35	43	37	92	
J	22	28	12	15	33	40	52	94	
K	11	21	12	14	33	37	42	104	
L	12	20	16	18	43	50	34	94	
M	29	30	19	18	58	52	105	128	
N	15	27	9	16	28	42	34	115	
	18.07	24.9	13.5	16	38.2143	43.786	57.57	108.29	Average
		6.8		2.5		5.6		50.72	Av Post - Av Pre
	6.534	3.55	3.4138	1.8811	9.58507	6.6353	29.81	25.781	Standard Deviation
		5.04		2.65		8.11		27.79	Average Standard Deviation
		1.35		0.9		0.6		1.82	Effect Size

Table 4: Growth in individual students from Teacher group- Paraphrasing

Student	Growth
A	1.98
B	0.59
C	0.59
D	0.79
E	2.38
F	0.79
G	2.38
H	1.19
I	0.79
J	1.19
K	2.18
L	1.58
M	0.19
N	2.38

Students that scored 15 or below in the pre test of Paraphrasing showed the most growth, these were students.

A, E, G, K, L & N. Their growth was over 1.5, increasing their score between 8 to 12 points. This would indicate that explicit teaching of paraphrasing had a greater impact on the lower performing group.

Student H & J scored 19 and 22 in the pre test showing a growth of 1.19, increasing their score by 6 points. The anomaly to this growth of the lower performing group is Student I who scored 16 in the pre test but improved by four points to 20 in the post-test, with a growth of .79.

Students B, C, D, F & M that scored 23 and above in the pre-test showed the least growth with an increase in their scores between three and four points. Student M had the least growth of 0.19 with a pre-test score of 29 and a post-test score of 30. These scores were still the highest within the group in both of the tests.

Table 5: Growth in individual students from Teacher group- TORCH

Student	Growth
A	1.48
B	1.23
C	0.61
D	- 0.73
E	0.99
F	0.24
G	1.24
H	0.49
I	0.98
J	0.86
K	0.49
L	0.86
M	-0.73
N	1.73

Students E, G & N who had raw scores under 10 out of the 19 questions in the TORCH pre-test improved their raw score by at least 4 points. Their TORCH scale scores were all below 30. Student N improved his raw score by seven points showing the largest growth of 1.73. These students were all below the 50th percentile in the pre test and moved to or above this percentile in the post-test.

Student A and B also showed a high growth above 1. Their pre test raw scores were 13 and 16 respectively with both of them at or above the mean percentile for their grade. Student B scored a perfect score in his post-test.

Students C, H, I, K & L all showed growth from the pre to post- test by making gains in their scale score between 4 to 8 torch units.

Student F's growth was 0.24 with a scale score improvement from 40 to 42. This student was already at or above the 50th percentile mean achievement in the pre test.

The anomaly to this growth pattern is that Student D and M both showed a decline in their growth. In the pre-test, both these children scored above 50 in the scale score, which was the highest in the group in the pre test but both answered one extra item incorrectly in the post-test. They were still in the highest scorers within the group.

Table 6:Growth in individual students from Teacher group-Synonym scores.

Student	Growth
A	1.00
B	1.22
C	1.74
D	1.74
E	1.45
F	1.87
G	1.90
H	1.54
I	1.77
J	1.35
K	2.00
L	1.61
M	0.74
N	2.61

There is a substantial growth in all students from the pre test scores to the post-test scores.

Student K & N show the highest growth of 2.0 and over compared to the group.

Student G scored the lowest in the group in his pre test with 19 synonyms listed. His post-test scored 78, showing a growth of 1.90.

Student M is the only student who did not show a growth over 1.0. Student M was the second highest scorer in the synonym pre test with 105 and became the fourth highest in the post-test with 128. Her growth was 0.74, which was the lowest in the group.

Table 7: Pre and Post Test Scores for Control Group

CONTROL GROUP	Para PRE	Para POST	TORCH raw PRE	TORCH raw POST	TORCH scale score PRE	TORCH scale score POST	Syn PRE	Syn POST	
A	15	19	14	15	37	40	47	56	
B	25	25	16	18	42	51	86	70	
C	25	26	12	12	33	33	70	72	
D	14	14	13	14	35	37	61	71	
E	19	22	14	14	37	37	60	74	
F	20	20	15	17	40	46	42	60	
G	10	10	11	13	32	35	28	50	
H	24	25	15	15	40	40	58	68	
I	24	24	17	18	46	51	56	65	
J	14	15	10	13	29	35	Abs	60	
K	15	18	11	11	31	31	75	80	
L	12	12	10	11	29	31	32	38	
	18.0833	19.167	13.167	14.25	35.9167	38.917	55.909	63.67	Average
		1.08		1.08		3		7.76	Av Post- Av Pre
									Standard
	5.43488	5.4578	2.3677	2.4541	5.38446	7.0254	17.717	11.63	Deviation
									Average
		5.4		2.41		6.2		14.67	Standard
									Deviation
		0.2		0.4		0.4		0.5	Effect
									Size

Table 8: Growth in individual students from the Control group- Paraphrasing

Student	Growth
A	0.74
B	0
C	0.18
D	0
E	0.55
F	0
G	0
H	0.18
I	0
J	0.18
K	0.55
L	0

There was no growth evident in the post results for paraphrasing from students B, D, F, G, I & L, which is half the group.

Students C, H & J improved their score in the paraphrasing post-test by one point, showing a growth of 0.18.

Students E & K improved their score in the paraphrasing post-test by three points, showing a growth of 0.55.

Student A was the most improved in the paraphrasing test by four points moving from a score of 15 to 19 showing a growth of 0.74.

Table 9: Growth in individual students from the Control group- TORCH

Student	Growth
A	0.48
B	1.45
C	0
D	0.32
E	0
F	0.9
G	0.48
H	0
I	0.8
J	0.9
K	0
L	0.32

There was no growth evident in the post results in the scale score for TORCH from students C, E, H, & K.

Student D & L moved up the scale score by two torch points with D having a raw score of 13 for pre and 14 for the post-test and L having a raw score of 10 for pre and 11 for the post-test.

Students A & G made an improvement by three torch points in the scale scores with A moving from 37 to 40 with a raw score of pre 14 to post 15 and G from 32 to 35 with a raw score of pre 11 to post 13.

Students F & J improved their scale score by six. F's scale score moved from 40 to 46 with a raw score of pre 15 to post 17. J's scale score moved from 29 to 35 with a pre test raw score of 10 to post-test raw score of 13.

Student B has the most growth with the pre scale score moving from 42 to 51 with a pre-test raw score of 16 to a post raw score of 18.

Table 10: Growth in individual students from the Control group- Synonyms

Student	Growth
A	0.61
B	-1.9
C	0.13
D	0.68
E	0.95
F	0.81
G	1.50
H	0.68
I	0.61
J	N/A
K	0.34
L	0.40

Student B shows a decline in growth from a pre score of 86 to a post score of 70. Student J shows no result because of an absence for the pre-test.

Students C, K & L growth was at or below 0.40 with scores moving up by six at the most.

Students A, D, H & I growth were all in the 0.60 growth area with scores moving up by nine or ten.

Students E & F had a growth between 0.80 and 0.95 with E's score improving by 14 and F's score improving by 18.

Student G's growth was the highest at 1.50 increasing the pre-test score by 22.

**Refer to Appendix 2:
An EXCEL spread sheet of Table 1, 2, 3 & 7.**

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to investigate if explicit teaching of paraphrasing and use of synonyms to Grade Three students would improve comprehension at the whole text level. The effect size results, as shown in Figure 1, support this hypothesis. The teacher group made substantial growth in the three areas that were tested; paraphrasing, synonyms and comprehension, using the TORCH test, compared to the control group. It must be said though, that the number of students tested in this research cannot be conclusive, as many more students would be needed to make these results significant.

Without intervention it must be noted that there was growth in the control group but it was not as widespread or as substantial as the majority of the teacher group. Normal Literacy classes in the two and a half weeks between the pre and post testing included elements of teaching comprehension strategies. The teaching within this classroom was beyond my control and may or may not have had an impact on the results.

In paraphrasing, half of the control group showed no growth from the pre test to the post-test. Student A commented that he felt more confident doing this test again and his results showed this. In the synonym test there was some growth in all of the students. This may be due in part to a student teacher in the classroom teaching some lessons on synonyms. These lessons were taught after the pre test and only brought to the researchers attention after student G asked for more information about synonyms because he was interested. This interest may have had an impact on his higher score. In the TORCH test, four students showed no growth and two answered one more question correctly. Growth in the other students may be explained because it was a familiar story but this condition was the same for the teacher group. Student B has the highest growth, she is an avid reader, and is considered one of the 'brighter' students in the class according to the classroom teacher. She scored well in all pre tests but decreased her score in the synonym test; there is no apparent reason for this. On the whole though, the control class were not happy about being tested again as there was no context to the tests for them.

In the teacher group, six of the lowest scoring students in the pre test of all three tests showed the highest growth in the post-test. (Woolley, 2008) supports this view, that students with learning difficulties can make greater progress with instructional interventions. My research shows that explicit teaching within the classroom setting can have a bigger impact on the lower performing students. The classroom teacher identified Student E, G & N as being 'at risk' students. These students scored consistently low across all three pre tests. They showed a correlation of high growth patterns across all three post-tests.

Overall the greatest growth shown in individual students and in the effect size score within the teacher group was in the synonym test. All the students were totally engaged when working with synonyms in the classroom lessons and became very competent at using the synonym table when reading a text. They enjoyed finding out more about words and were good at clarifying the meaning because of prior involvement in reciprocal reading. This engagement is reflected in their much higher post-test results. When initially tested they were unsure on the meaning of a synonym. The classroom teacher has since noticed an increase in the vocabulary used in the class and that the students will often say, "what other word could I use instead of that one".

The paraphrasing test showed the next highest growth in individual students and in the effect size score within the teacher group. Once again the students enjoyed the lessons, they were engaged and responded well to using the acronym RAP. By using the Collins model within the lessons the students were never overwhelmed and they were not expected to work independently until they were ready. All the reading articles were all age appropriate (checked using the Flesch Readability Score), and they found the NAPLAN Reading Magazine stories engaging. Their paraphrasing score may have improved more if they were better able to explore the concept of highlighting the main ideas of the story. This was a harder concept to teach, and although there was improvement, the students required more than the ten lessons allocated to this research. (Woolley, 2010) supports the notion that reading comprehension can be improved when the students are taught to ask questions that go beyond the literal level. This happened to an extent, but they needed to integrate the information between the text and their prior knowledge to better highlight the main ideas of the story. Overall the students' ability to paraphrase a piece of writing improved every day and they were able to demonstrate a better understanding of what was being read. (Fisk and Hurst, 2003) reiterate this by stating that paraphrasing for comprehension works so well because it integrates all modes of communication: reading and writing, listening and speaking, which leads to a deeper understanding of the text.

The least amount of growth was in the overall comprehension area. This was tested using TORCH. Even though this was the least area of growth, it must be noted, eight out of the fourteen students performed below the 50th percentile and mean achievement in the pre test. Only one student fell below this percentile in the post-test, and that child had moved from a raw score of seven up to twelve. This result supports the hypothesis that explicit teaching of paraphrasing and use of synonyms to Grade Three students will improve comprehension at the whole text level. The two students who were an anomaly to this result who were the highest scorers in the pre test did say that they felt that they had over thought their responses and were not quite sure why they chose the choice they did. They were still in the highest scorers within the group. It could be said from the results of this research that explicit teaching of comprehension strategies to children that already grasp many of the comprehension strategies need a slightly higher order thinking approach within set tasks. It means that the classroom teacher would need to differentiate her lessons to suit all levels within the class.

Comprehension strategies must be taught to all grades across the school. This research study has heightened my awareness of the need to incorporate the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies, not just paraphrasing with synonyms but all metacognitive strategies that incorporate comprehension monitoring by the student.

Within the classroom setting students need to be asked questions before, during and after reading that ascertain whether or not they are actively engaged and using metacognitive strategy processes. As stated in (Woolley, 2008) students need to know teacher's purposes and assessment expectations. The students need to be guided or scaffolded through strategies whereby they take up the responsibility as readers to ask their own questions, make their own connections, to visualise their own images and make and re-make their own predictions. Teachers need to determine if students are using appropriate strategies to better comprehend by having conversations with them, reading their written responses and observing them closely.

This research was only conducted on one targeted reading strategy and is only one facet of a very complex strategy system. Over the three week period there was enough growth of students overall comprehension to pursue implementing further explicit metacognitive reading strategies within the classroom context. Following rigorous

assessment the students who do not make enough progress in the classroom should be considered for involvement in an intervention program outside the normal classroom setting. However as suggested by (Woolley, 2008), it is important to remember that the learning of a new reading strategy can take up to six months to consolidate.

The overall implication is that the MLOTP model of reading (Munro, 1985; cited in Munro 2010) will be used to develop a more cohesive and systematic approach to the teaching of reading strategies across all grade levels at our school. Each year, teachers can build on strategies that students already understand. Common language is essential and students need to be taught how to use these strategies flexibly across all forms and varieties of texts. A clear knowledge of comprehension strategies as well as having an awareness of when and how to use them supplies the student with tactics that will ensure that meaning is constructed while reading. We need to develop readers that have the disposition to stay on top of their thinking so that they are able to access the strategy that best suit their purpose. As teachers we must keep in mind that the overall purpose of reading never changes, it is always about understanding what has been read.

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Appendix
One
Classroom
Lessons

Lesson One (45 minutes)

Introduction: (10 minutes)

Pre tests have been completed: Paraphrasing, Synonyms and TORCH.

Tch: *Over the next two weeks I am going to teach you some strategies you can use that will help you to remember what you read.*

-Paraphrasing is used after you read each sentence and then you ask yourself questions about the main ideas. You put these main points in your own words.

-We are also going to look at the importance of knowing about the meaning of words and how this helps you understand what you are reading. We are going to use synonyms. It is always important to clarify what words mean.

Relate this process to learning that has already happened in class- Reciprocal Reading and PROBE lessons.

Elaboration: (10 minutes)

Model:

Paraphrase sentence on board-

Read aloud: *We went to see our cousins.*

Model the questions asked:

How could you say it another way?

What words could I change but still retain the meaning?

Teacher's changed sentence: *Our family visited our relatives.*

Whole Group:

Paraphrase sentence together by asking for suggestions from the whole group:

Our school had good fun on Friday doing book week activities.

Think- Pair- Share:

Two words written on board, their meaning discussed and then in pairs they discuss how many other words they can think of – synonyms.

Plump/ Break

In sharing the importance of not changing the meaning is stressed.

Practice: (15 minutes)

Read together: The Bet Between Wind and Sun (Aesop's Fables)- Displayed on interactive smart board:

As a group discuss the main points in the story.

Small Groups- hard copy (2 sentences each)

6 groups of 4 (mixed ability created from pre data of all children in Grade 3&4)

Paraphrase 2 sentences from passage- write down responses on paper with original sentences. **(Rove and discuss process with groups that need assistance)**

Whole Group

Sheets of paper collected and explained that they will be looked at tomorrow.

Review (10 minutes)

In what way did this activity help you to understand the sentence?

(Do you have a clearer picture in your mind)?

Further activity:

Find the meaning of décor: (Children are looking at French culture in class)

Resources: Aesop's Fable- 'The Bet Between Wind and Sun': Electronic & hard copy

Lesson Two (40 minutes)

Introduction: (10 minutes)

Display and discuss the paraphrased work from previous lesson: 'The Bet Between Wind and Sun'.

What questions did you ask yourself?

Discuss changes and if they retained meaning- discuss clarity of understanding.

Use table to write word from story and synonym used

Text word	Meaning	Synonym
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Elaboration (5 minutes)

Revisit meaning of décor: Display advertisement and discuss context

List the ways that we can find the meanings of words.

- Reading the word in context
- Ask an expert/ Ask a friend
- Use a dictionary/ Use a thesaurus
- Internet sites- < Dictionary.com> <Thesaurus.com>

Practice (15 minutes)

Read together: The Hare and the Tortoise

Discuss the meaning of the story and clarify the meaning of some of the words used

Small Groups same as previous day

5 groups-Paraphrase 2 sentences from passage- write down responses on paper with original sentences.

1 group-Find in dictionary and thesaurus, the meaning of, and synonyms of some words from the story: boasting, challenge, contempt, plodded (use chart structure)

(Rove and discuss process with groups that need assistance)

Review (10 minutes)

In what way did this activity help you to understand the story better (have a clearer picture in your mind)?

Dictionary and Thesaurus group share if the activity helped them have a clearer picture in their mind about the word and how did this compare to the use of the word in the story

Further activity:

Find the meaning of dejavu: (Children are looking at French culture in class)

Resources:

Dictionaries and Thesaurus's

Décor advertisement

Aesop's Fable- 'The Bet Between Wind and Sun': Electronic & hard copy

- 'The Hare and the Tortoise': Electronic & hard copy

Lesson Three

Introduction (10 minutes)

Review paraphrased story from yesterday: ‘Rabbit and the Hare’

What do we remember from the text?

Shared reading: The reader reads sentence and then the paraphrased sentence.

Children discuss what do we do when we paraphrase?

Children discuss the choices made for paraphrasing and decide if the changes retained meaning.

Elaboration (5 minutes)

Introduce **R.A.P.** acronym to assist with paraphrasing

Refer to poster:

- **R**ead the text
- **A**sk your self some questions about the main idea and details
- **P**ut the main ideas and details into your own words. Try to change as many words you can. (Using synonyms.)

Practice (15 minutes)

RAP focus – highlight steps using a CLOZE activity: ‘Otter Story’

A choice between three words has to be made about what to be put into the text.

Read each sentence aloud (student chosen to read a sentence at a time). Any clarifications about the story are discussed at this point eg- setting/time.

Small Groups: Pairs of mixed ability

: Use RAP strategy

(Rove and discuss process with groups that need assistance)

Review (10 minutes)

Discuss word choice and the importance of reading words in context

What questions did you ask yourselves? **A** part of **RAP**

What did you do after making the choice of word- reread?

Resources:

Otto story-CLOZE: *Year 3 Comprehension Checkpoint*, Jack Norman & Mark Fletcher.

RAP poster- reference (Schumaker, Denton & Dreshler, 1984)

Lesson Four

Introduction: (10 minutes)

Refer to poster:

- Read the text
- Ask your self some questions about the main idea and details
- Put the main ideas and details into your own words. Try to change as many words as you can.

Revisit CLOZE sheet- Otter story

Each pair of children reads aloud a sentence and must give reasons for their choice of word.

Refer to Paraphrase poster.

Are you asking yourself questions and rereading?

Does this process make the story clearer in your minds?

Elaboration: (10 minutes)

Display '*The story of Opo*' on Interactive Whiteboard. Read the whole story out loud to the class. Discuss in brief the setting/characters the main idea of the story

Refer to **RAP** poster.

Model/ Share paraphrasing of first two sentences in first paragraph.

Use table for synonyms chosen

Text Word	Meaning	Synonym
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Practice (10 minutes)

Small Groups pairs (mixed ability). Each group has their own copy of story and a synonym table to fill in.

Children write their own paraphrase of the rest of the first paragraph. (4 sentences)

(Rove and discuss process with groups that need assistance)

Review: (10 minutes)

Pairs share synonym table of words chosen for the sentences

Some children read their new sentence.

Students comment on how the used the RAP strategy and do they understand that part of the story better than before.

Resources:

NAPLAN Reading Magazine,2008. '*The story of Opo*', (Electronic & hard copy)

Lesson Five (40 minutes)

Introduction (10 minutes)

Use synonym puzzle game (12 words and pictures to match). Have students find their synonym pair and then add picture. Share findings.

Reinforce the meaning of synonyms through questions

Elaboration: (10 minutes)

Display 'The story of Opo' on Interactive Whiteboard.

In working pairs from Lesson 4 revisit the first paraphrased paragraph.

Reflect on process and what was learnt from previous lesson.

Refer to poster:

- Read the text
- Ask your self some questions about the main idea and details
- Put the main ideas and details into your own words. Try to change as many words as you can.

Students and teacher read aloud the other three paragraphs of 'The story of Opo'.

Practice (10 minutes)

Hard copies of story given to each group- same mixed ability pairs

Allocation of paragraphs given to each group, four to five sentences to each paragraph. Synonym table is to be used. Children start process but the activity will not be completed.

(Rove and discuss process with groups that need assistance)

Review (10 minutes)

Ask what steps they used when paraphrasing...(RAP poster)

How does this process help?

Lesson Six (40 minutes)

Introduction (10 minutes)

Use synonym puzzle game: Same pair as lesson 5. Students add one or more synonym by using a thesaurus or dictionary. Share results with group

Elaboration (5 minutes)

Display 'The story of Opo' on Interactive Whiteboard.

Children read out completed paraphrased sentences. (Clarify any problems)

Practice (15 minutes)

Complete paraphrasing. Refer to RAP poster. Use synonym table.

(Rove and assist)

Review: (10 minutes)

Compare paraphrased sentences with groups that had same paragraph.

Discuss similarities and differences and then share these findings with the class

What did you learn?

Resources

RAP poster

Smart Kids, *Synonym Matching Game*

NAPLAN: Reading Magazine, 2008. 'The story of Opo', (Electronic & hard copy)

Lesson Seven (40 minutes)

Introduction (5 minutes)

Students retell story from previous lessons- 'The story of Opo'
Different children within the group say what they remember about each paragraph.
Recall paraphrase steps-RAP. Recall the meaning of synonyms

Elaboration (10 minutes)

On Interactive Whiteboard display: 'Postcard -Dear Kim'

Teacher and Students Read Aloud each paragraph.

Discuss the setting and purpose of the postcard and clarify the meaning of some of the words used.

Refer to poster:

- **Read** the text
- **Ask** your self some questions about the main idea and details
- **Put** the main ideas and details into your own words. Try to change as many words as you can.

Oral Paraphrase- Think, Pair, Share- 7 sentences

Practice (15 minutes)

Each student individually writes a paraphrase of each paragraph
(Early finishers have a synonym puzzle activity to complete)

Rove and assist- pull out children into a group that are having difficulties

Share synonym table and paraphrased piece with a partner

Review (10 minutes)

What did you learn?

Did you keep the main idea?

How did the RAP strategy help you?

Resources

NAPLAN: 'Postcard -Dear Kim', 2009 Reading Magazine

Synonym activity: *Year 3 Comprehension Checkpoint*, Jack Norman & Mark Fletcher.

Lesson 8 (40 minutes)

Introduction (5 minutes)

Students retell story from previous lessons- 'Postcard -Dear Kim'
Different children within the group say what they remember about each sentence.
Recall paraphrase steps-RAP.
Recall the meaning of synonyms
On Interactive Whiteboard display: 'Postcard -Dear Kim'

Elaboration (10 minutes)

Display 'Modern Accident' picture.
Discuss what the picture might be about
Display synonym cloze article on interactive whiteboard- key words left out and synonym word needs to be matched with the five key words
Teacher/Students read article.
Questions clarified

Practice (15 minutes)

Individually complete synonym cloze article
Early finishes have a synonym puzzle activity to complete
Rove and assist- pull out children into a group that are having difficulties
Share synonym cloze piece with a partner.

Review (10 minutes)

How did the synonym choice of words help the meaning of the text?
What have you learned today?

Resources:

- R.A.P. poster
- NAPLAN: 'Postcard -Dear Kim', 2009 Reading Magazine-electronic copy
- Synonym activity: *Year 3 Comprehension Checkpoint*, Jack Norman & Mark Fletcher.
- Synonym Close- 'Modern Accident' (adapted) e:lit, e:update 012, 2010 (electronic)

Lesson 9 (40 minutes)

Introduction (5 minutes)

Students retell story from previous lessons- 'Modern Accident'
Different children within the group say what they remember about each sentence.
On Interactive Whiteboard display: 'Modern Accident'
Recall the meaning of the synonyms used.

Elaboration (10 minutes)

Recall paraphrase steps-RAP.
On Interactive Whiteboard display: 'Chimpanzees'
Teacher and Students Read Aloud each paragraph.
Discuss the setting and purpose of the article
Refer to poster:
- **Read** the text
- **Ask** your self some questions about the main idea and details
- **Put** the main ideas and details into your own words. Try to change as many words as you can.

Practice (15 minutes)

Each student individually writes a paraphrase of each paragraph
(Early finishers have a synonym puzzle activity to complete)
Rove and assist- pull out children into a group that are having difficulties
Share synonym table and paraphrased piece with a partner

Review (10 minutes)

This was an independent activity today.
Did you go through the RAP steps?
How did the synonym word help?
What have you learnt about the strategy?
When will you use this strategy?

Resources:

- RAP poster
- NAPLAN: 'Chimpanzees', 2008 Reading Magazine, VCCA (electronic& hard copy)
- Synonym Close- 'Modern Accident' (adapted) e:lit, e:update 012, 2010 (electronic)

Lesson 10 (40 minutes)

Introduction (10 minutes)

Teacher:

What can we have to do to help us understand what it is that we are reading?

Children

- Read the text
- Ask your self some questions about the main idea and details
- Put the main ideas and details into your own words. Try to change as many words as you can. (Use synonyms)

Elaboration / Practice (15 minutes)

- Students each have a copy of story 'Koalas'
 - Students read silently each paragraph
 - Each student paraphrases each paragraph silently
 - Share written piece with a partner
- Quiet reading for early finishers

Rove and assist

Review (15 minutes)

This was an independent activity today- did you go through the steps

What did you do make the main idea clear?

How did the synonym word help?

How does this help to make the piece of writing clearer?

When will you use this strategy?

Write down new learning

Resources

NAPLAN: 'Koalas', 2009 Reading Magazine, VCCA (electronic& hard copy)

Appendix
Two
Excel Data
Results