

Paraphrasing is an Effective Reading Comprehension Strategy

Abstract

Most students can decode a Level 28 text by the end of Grade Two however by the end of primary school there is a proportion of students that despite being able to read fluently, with accuracy and expression, have difficulty retelling what they have read and have difficulty answering questions about the text they have read. In this study it is proposed that **explicitly teaching the paraphrasing strategy along with synonyms to Grade Five/Six students will improve their reading comprehension of fiction texts.** The results support this hypothesis.

Research suggests that teaching a comprehension strategy such as the paraphrasing strategy will improve student reading comprehension outcomes. In this case the ability to generate synonyms will be a focus at the beginning of every one of the ten explicitly taught paraphrasing strategy lessons. Support and immediate positive feedback is given at every stage of the lessons. The lessons are delivered to the whole class over a two-week period during the timetabled morning literacy block.

Students vary in age from ten to twelve years old and are predominantly from a Caucasian background. This study compares two groups, the Intervention Group and the Control Group, who were explicitly taught the paraphrasing strategy along with synonym knowledge to improve the reading comprehension of fiction texts.

Introduction

Reading is a complex process. Varied models and theories have been put forward to describe the cognitive processes that take place when reading (Kintsch 1988, Freebody & Luke 1990, Hoover & Gough 1990, Munro 1996, 2004, Hoad et al 2005). Freebody and Luke (1990) identify four areas of knowledge required for competent reading: code breakers, meaning makers, text users and text analyst. Kintsch (1988) adheres to the construction-integration model of reading. In this model readers are said to read by identifying text ideas and linking these ideas to what they already know by forming a literal comprehension, by inferring meaning and by generating an overview of the topic in the text. Hoover and Gough (1990) name two areas of skill required for competent reading. These are decoding and comprehension. Munro (1996, 2004) has amalgamated and further developed a model that presents the reader as using multiple levels of text processing and also incorporates the reader's own metacognitive knowledge.

By the end of Grade Two most students can decode age appropriate texts (see Table 1). Every student's reading behaviour is noted and reading running records are collected during an individual teacher/student interview. A high percentage of Grade Two students are able to decode Level 28 texts by the end of the Grade Two school year (see Table 1). The students that did not attain a decoding level of 28 scored 26 or 27. In each cohort of students there might be one or two students that have been diagnosed with various conditions that restrict learning or have experienced adverse home environments. By the end of Grade Six students can decode, read fluently, read accurately and read at an appropriate rate with good expression but a proportion of these same students have difficulty retelling what they have read and have difficulty answering questions about the text they have read (see Table 2). Comprehension tests such as TORCH verify these findings.

Table 1. Catholic Education Office Melbourne: Grade Two Decoding Data

Year	Percentage of students decoding at text level 28 (%)	Percentage of students not decoding at text level 28 (%)
2006	98	2
2007	91	8
2008	73	27
2009	85	15
2010*	89	11

*School Data

The decoding and NAPLAN data were taken from a co-educational primary school that uses composite class groupings. The school is set in middle class area that has a predominantly Caucasian population. All students in the school speak English at home. A small minority of these families have parents who speak another language to grandparents. The school does not receive funding for ESL (English as a second language) students. The student population is around two hundred and eighty. There are three Grade Five/Six classes. Students are evenly placed across the three grades according to their academic, social and behavioural needs. One of these grades is the control group and another grade is the intervention group. Reading comprehension results have sometimes been lower than expected for a number of years (see Table 2).

Table 2. NAPLAN DATA FOR READING

Year	School Median Score Grade 3	State Median Score	School Median Score Grade 5	State Median Score
2003	2.2	2.4	3.3	3.0
2004	2.5	2.4	3.0	3.1
2005	2.6	2.4	2.9	3.3
2006	2.4	2.5	2.7	3.1
2007	2.1	2.4	2.9	3.1
	Scaled scores	Scaled scores	Scaled scores	Scaled scores
2008	416.0	426.2	487.5	498.6
2009	402.8	429.4	457.4	509.5
2010	410.5	432.5	500.5	500.5

Explicitly teaching the paraphrasing strategy along with synonyms to Grade Five/Six students will improve their reading comprehension of fiction texts.

Good readers monitor for comprehension while they are reading whereas poorer readers simply decode rather than use information from the text to add to their knowledge base (Hedin 2010). Readers who score well in comprehension tests can reread, locate information in the text, retell what they have read, summarise the text, visualise aspects of the text, paraphrase parts of the text, clarify meaning, make inferences from the text, make connections with the information from the text to what they already know and therefore add to the sum of their knowledge.

Paraphrasing is a reading comprehension strategy that can be taught by teachers and used by students to assist them to monitor and understand what they are reading (Schumaker, Denton, & Deshler, 1984). Rosenshine, and Meister, (1994) believe that paraphrasing is an important technique that can be taught to improve comprehension. Paraphrasing involves putting the text into the reader's own words. The reader must carefully read the text, think about the text and then transfer the author's message into the reader's own words. The strategy can be used for both fiction and non-fiction texts. Some researchers use the acronym RAP (read a paragraph, ask questions about the text, paraphrase the text) to assist students make metacognitive connections (Katims, & Harris, 1992); (Hagaman, & Reid, 2008); and (Hagaman, Luschen, & Reid, 2010). Other researchers use explicit instruction along with clear explanations about the value of learning the paraphrasing strategy (Kletzien, 2009; Hedin, 2010).

In this study the latter method was used. Students from a Grade Five/Six class were introduced to the paraphrasing strategy as a means of improving reading comprehension. Synonyms were taught for at the beginning of the paraphrasing lessons to assist students with paraphrasing. Ten paraphrasing lessons were prepared and explicitly delivered using a model of teaching and learning developed by Collins, Brown, & Newman (1989). The teacher's role in these lessons was to firstly model how to generate synonyms and how to paraphrase. The teacher then provided guidance and support while students worked through generating synonyms and paraphrasing short texts. Finally the teacher provided prompts as the students completed the tasks independently. The students' role was to verbalise why learning synonyms and paraphrasing helped them with comprehension and when to use this strategy. Students also thought about what new learning they had accumulated and how to apply this learning to new situations. The beginning of each lesson was devoted to the development and awareness of synonyms. Three lessons were modelled, three lessons were shared and four lessons were independent with immediate feedback provided at each stage of every lesson. Students completed a synonyms, paraphrasing and comprehension test prior to commencing the ten lessons and again at the completion of the ten lessons.

All texts used for paraphrasing were taken from *Key Into Reorganisation* (see Materials). These texts have readability at a Grade Four level. Easy texts were selected to assist students experience success using the paraphrasing strategy rather than have them concentrate on the meaning of the text (Hedin 2010).

Method

Design

The study uses a natural design in the context of an actual classroom where the intervention strategy is taught to the whole class during the timetabled morning literacy block. The baseline scores are obtained prior to teaching the intervention strategy by testing the ability to read and generate synonyms, the ability to read and paraphrase and by testing reading comprehension. Synonyms and the paraphrasing strategy are explicitly taught over ten lessons. The gain in reading comprehension following synonym and paraphrasing teaching is monitored for Grade Five/Six students. Another Grade Five/Six class served as the control group where synonyms and paraphrasing were not taught.

Participants

The participants are the students of a grade five/six classroom that have parental permission to publish their results. Synonyms and the paraphrasing strategy were taught to the whole class. No students were withdrawn from the classroom. All participants attend a relatively small primary school, with a population of around two hundred and eighty, in a middle class area. There are three grades of five/six students. There is a wide range of social, behavioural and academic abilities across the three classes. All classes have twenty-five or twenty-six students with more boys than girls. The intervention students vary in age from 10-12 years old (see Appendix 1). The classroom teacher delivers the lessons to the participants. The school has no funded ESL students. The majority of students were able to decode level 28 texts by the end of Grade Two. One student in the intervention group is not able to decode at level 28. However, this student has an age appropriate level of oral comprehension. There are a wide variety of comprehension levels across the class with some Grade Five students scoring higher than Grade Six students (see Appendix 1)

Materials

The class comes to a common understanding of the word ‘*synonym*’ and ‘*paraphrasing*’. These definitions are displayed in the classroom. Students generated synonyms of common words from their general knowledge. A class list of these synonyms was collated on the whiteboard and students recorded these in their books. The class lists of synonyms were displayed in the classroom. Synonyms were found for the following words: many, happy, sad, big, small beautiful, boy, girl, dog, cat, house, nice, jump, dress, horrible, picture, throw, pen, bed, horse, work, phone, knife, glass, floor, people, tired, ship and fearless.

All texts used for paraphrasing comes from ‘*Key Into Reorganisation*’ by Triune Initiatives (2003). These texts have a Readability Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level of 5.2. The texts are therefore at an easy level for a grade five/six class.

Reading comprehension was assessed using TORCH (2003). Students read a long fiction text silently and then completed a cloze activity to gauge understanding. The selected text administered to all students was ‘*The Cats*’. This text is suitable for students from Year 4 to Year 6. Students who achieved a perfect score in the pre-test were given another comprehension test the following day. Grade Five students were given ‘*She’s Crying*’ and Grade Six students were given ‘*The Accident*’. Both of these other texts are also fiction. ‘*She’s Crying*’ is suitable for students from Year Five to Year Seven and ‘*The Accident*’ is suitable for students from Year Six to Year 8. The raw score of the comprehension test was recorded

Procedure

The tasks were administered to all students during the morning literacy block between nine and eleven o’clock. Each session took from thirty minutes to forty-five minutes to complete.

The students’ synonym knowledge and paraphrasing ability was established using a synonym pre-test and a paraphrasing pre-test. The students’ reading comprehension was established using TORCH (see Resources). The synonym and paraphrasing pre-test were administered on the same day and TORCH was administered on the following day.

Ten explicit lessons on generating synonyms and paraphrasing were delivered on a daily basis from Monday through to Thursday until completed. The synonym and paraphrasing post-test was then administered on the following day and then TORCH on the next day.

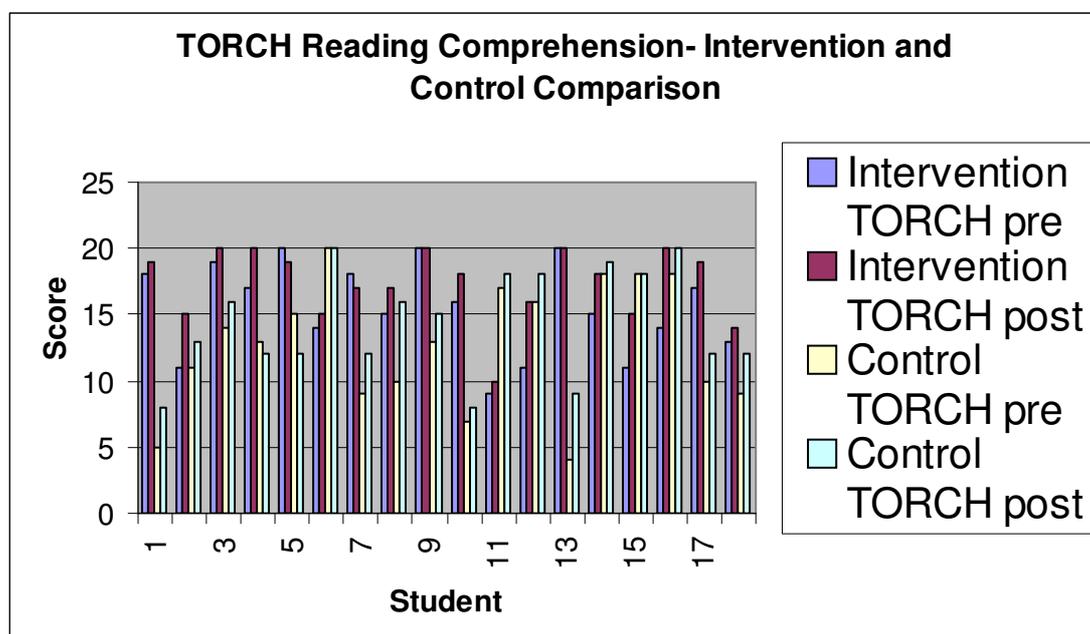
Data from the pre-test was compared to the post-test results. Any increases in synonym, paraphrasing and reading comprehension knowledge could support the hypothesis that explicit teaching of synonyms and paraphrasing does increase reading comprehension.

Results

The results indicate strong support for the hypothesis that explicitly teaching Grade Five/Six students to generate synonyms and to paraphrase increases their reading comprehension of fiction texts. The majority of students in the intervention group made improvements in their comprehension scores (see Table 3). Seventeen of the nineteen students improved their TORCH comprehension raw scores (see Graph 1). All students were given the same TORCH assessment. In this study a fiction extract from *'The Cats'* by Joan Phipson was selected since this text is suggested suitable for students from Year 4 to Year 6. Students with average scores seemed to have made the most improvements. Student P moved from 14 to 20, Student L moved from 11 to 16, Student O moved from 11 to 15 and Student B also moved from 11 to 15. Students with a pre-test score of 17 or above recorded the least amount of growth since these students were already close to the maximum score. Student A moved from 18 to 19, Student C moved from 19 to 20 and Student Q moved from 17 to 19. Two students scored one less mark on their post-test compared to their pre-test. Student E went from 20 to 19 however this student was given another TORCH assessment, *'The Accident'*, at the pre-test stage and scored well. *'The Accident'* is a fiction extract suitable for students from Year 6 to Year 8. Student G went from a score of 18 to 17 for the comprehension assessment but had substantial growth with synonyms with a personal effect size of 1.13. This student also scored well with paraphrasing, recording a personal growth of 1.06. The standard deviation of the intervention group for reading comprehension of fiction texts is 3.08 compared to 4.37 for the control group. This indicates that the spread is tighter for the control group. The effect size of the control group is 0.39 compared to the effect size of the intervention group, which is 0.61. Although the effect size for reading comprehension is not as spectacular as the effect size for synonyms or paraphrasing, the change in the students' results in reading comprehension can be attributed to explicit teaching of synonyms and the paraphrasing strategy. The control group has five students who scored below 10 for the TORCH test whereas the intervention group has only one student who scored below 10.

Table 3. TORCH raw scores: 'The Cats'

TORCH Comprehension Results					
Intervention Group			Control Group		
Students	Pre Score	Post Score	Students	Pre Score	Post Score
A	18	19	C1	5	8
B	11	15	C2	11	13
C	19	20	C3	14	16
D	17	20	C4	13	12
E	20	19	C5	15	12
F	14	15	C6	20	20
G	18	17	C7	9	12
H	15	17	C8	10	16
I	20	20	C9	13	15
J	16	18	C10	7	8
K	9	10	C11	17	18
L	11	16	C12	16	18
M	20	20	C13	4	9
N	15	18	C14	18	19
O	11	15	C15	18	18
P	14	20	C16	18	20
Q	17	19	C17	10	12
R	13	14	C18	9	12



Graph 1. TORCH Reading Comprehension Comparison

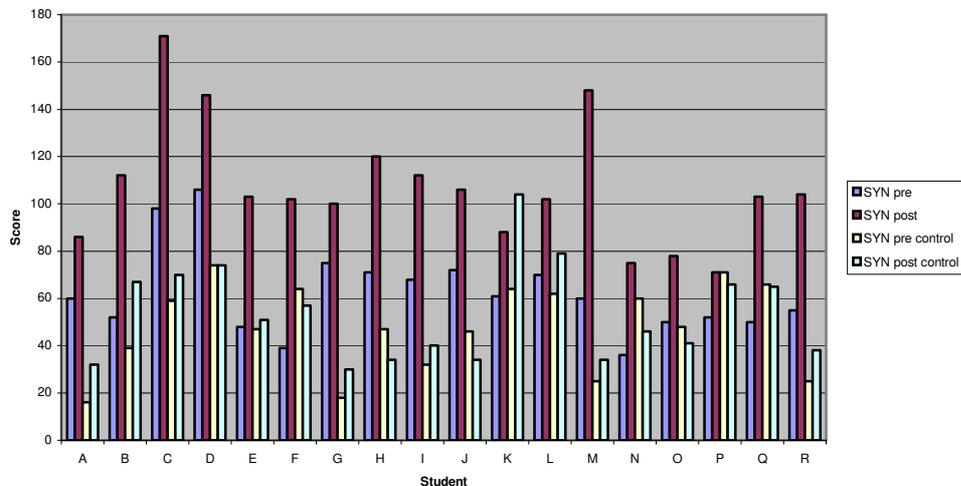
All students in the intervention group were able to generate synonyms independently by the end of the tenth lesson and all scored well in the synonym post-test with five students doubling their score or better (see Table 4). Student B went from 52 to 112, Student E went from 48 to 103, Student F moved from 39 to 102, Student M went from 60 to 148, Student N moved from 36 to 75 and Student Q went from 50 to 103. The average standard deviation or spread of the intervention group is 22.16, which

reflects the mixed abilities of the class. The effect size of explicitly teaching synonyms is 3.82. The pre-test and post-test results for synonyms for the control group are very different (see Graph 2). The average standard deviation of the control group is 20.6, which is similar to the intervention group however the effect size of the control group is 0.38. Three students in the control group had very low pre-test scores compared to their peers in both the control and the intervention group. These three students doubled their scores but they were still well below any of the others. Their gains can be explained by natural growth in oral language. Some students in the control group scored less for the post-test compared to the pre-test while others had scores that were very similar.

Table 4. Synonyms Test Results

Intervention Group			Control Group		
Students	Pre-test	Post-test	Students	Pre-test	Post-test
A1	69	86	C1	16	32
B2	52	112	C2	39	67
C3	98	171	C3	59	70
D4	106	146	C4	74	74
E5	48	103	C5	47	51
F6	39	102	C6	64	57
G7	75	100	C7	18	30
H8	71	120	C8	47	34
I9	68	112	C9	32	40
J10	72	106	C10	46	34
K11	61	88	C11	64	104
L12	70	102	C12	62	79
M13	60	148	C13	25	34
N14	36	75	C14	60	46
O15	50	78	C15	48	41
P16	52	71	C16	71	66
Q17	50	103	C17	66	65
R18	55	104	C18	25	38

Synonyms- Intervension vs Control



**Graph 2
Synonyms
Comparison
Control &
Intervention**

Nearly all students made progress in their ability to paraphrase in the intervention group (see Table 4). Only one student made no progress. Student D had a pre-test and post-test score of 31. The paraphrasing assessment score is out of 32 so Student D has a reasonable ability to paraphrase. Student D had the third highest score of 146 for synonym generation. Student C had the highest score of 171 for synonyms. It is interesting to note that Students C, D and M love to read and often choose reading over other activities during class free time. The standard deviation or spread of the intervention group is 3.79 compared to the control group, which is 5.11. After ten lessons of explicit instruction on paraphrasing, nearly all students in the control group made progress. The effect size of teaching paraphrasing to the intervention group is 6.79 whereas the effect size of the control group is -0.06. The control group scored a negative effect size because seven students scored less on the post-test compared to the pre-test. Control Student C2 scored particularly low with a score that went from 24 down to 12. These results indicate that explicitly teaching the paraphrasing strategy to Grade Five/Six students is very effective. The effect size of the intervention group is 6.79, compared to the effect size of the control group, which is negative 0.09. The effect size of the intervention group is quite large so it is less likely chance has influenced the results therefore the increased scores in the intervention group for paraphrasing is due to the explicit instructions that the students received.

Discussion

The results indicate strong support for the hypothesis that explicitly teaching Grade Five/Six students to generate synonyms and to paraphrase increases their reading comprehension of fiction texts. These results agree with the findings of other proponents of the paraphrasing strategy used to increase students' reading comprehension. Munro (1996, 2004, 2007), Katims & Harris (1997), Parker, Hasbrouck & Denton (2002), Lee & Von Colln (2003), Fisk and Hurst (2003), Hoad et al (2005), Hagaman & Reid (2008), Kletzien (2009), Hagaman, Luschen & Reid (2010) and Hedin (2010) have used and recommended the paraphrasing strategy as a means of improving students' reading comprehension however the link between synonym knowledge (or indeed, vocabulary knowledge) and paraphrasing has not been well documented and needs further investigation.

To measure which procedures have the most impact on student achievement Hattie (2009) uses effect size. Effect size is said to be $\{\text{Mean (post treatment)} - (\text{pre treatment})\} / \text{standard deviation (SD)}$. An effect size of one is said to have an increase of one standard deviation on the outcome of student achievement. Hattie (2009) considers an effect size of 0.6 in the high area, 0.4 in the medium area and 0.2 in the low area.

All students in the intervention group made excellent gains in their ability to generate synonyms independently (see Appendix 3). Both Student N and Student Q missed five lessons due to family holidays and still managed to make good progress in their ability to generate synonyms. Student M missed the first five lessons while Student P missed the last five lessons. During class discussions individual students volunteered to inform Student M and Student P on what the class had learned during their absence. Both of these students are good listeners and self-motivated learners. The control group students that had a low score for synonyms made the most progress e.g. Control C1 went from 16 to 32, Control C7 went from 18 to 30 while some students remained relatively unchanged e.g. Control C4 remained at 74 and C5 went from 47 to 51. Other

students in the Control Group made a loss in their score e.g. C8 went from 47 to 34 and C16 went from 60 to 48. The increase in scores for Control students C1 and C7 can simply be explained by their readiness for learning more from their daily scheduled lessons. The loss in scores for synonyms for other members of the Control Group could be attributed to a variety of different factors such as home environment, student engagement or persistence for the task, motivation and self-concept. Ultimately however the actual cause for the discrepancy in the synonym results for the control group would need further investigation. The size effect of explicitly teaching synonyms to the Intervention Group is 3.82 compared to the size effect of 0.38 of not teaching synonyms to the Control Group. Therefore gains made in generating synonyms in the Intervention Group can be attributed to the explicit teaching.

All but one student in the Intervention Group made progress in being able to paraphrase independently after participating in the explicit instruction of ten lessons. Student D's score remained constant at 31/32. Student D enjoys reading and had a high pre-test paraphrasing score. Scores for paraphrasing in the Control Group either remained relatively constant or were reduced. Control student C2 went from 24 to 12. This student was known to have had an unstable weekend with carers. The size effect of explicitly teaching paraphrasing to the Intervention Group is 6.79 whereas the size effect of not teaching this strategy to the Control Group is -0.06. The data strongly suggests that teachers can effectively teach the paraphrasing strategy to students of mixed abilities.

The majority of students in the Intervention Group made reading comprehension improvements after explicit instruction on the use of synonyms and the paraphrasing strategy. Two students scored one less mark on their post-test compared to their pre-test. Students that answered all questions correctly were given another test to complete the following day. Grade Five students were given *'She's Crying'* and Grade Six students were given *'The Accident'* since both these texts are fiction. Intervention Student E accurately answered all twenty questions on the pre-test so she also completed another comprehension test. She was given *'The Accident'* since this text is fiction and is suitable for students up to Year 8. The student's performance in this test would assist the teacher in planning work to suit her needs. Intervention Student G went from a score of 18 to 17. Although this student's reading comprehension score did not improve, improvements were made with synonym knowledge and ability to paraphrase. This student might need more time to refine the use of the paraphrasing strategy before it is noted in the comprehension scores. The time between the pre-test and the post-test was just two weeks. Continued use and focus on the paraphrasing strategy would assist the lower scoring students and those students, like Intervention Student G, who need more time to consolidate new learning to long-term memory. Intervention Students I and M answered all questions correctly and also completed another test. Using an easy text allowed all students in the Intervention Group to experience success. Although not measured in this study, all students' self-efficacy and confidence in generating synonyms, using the paraphrasing strategy and understanding the text, made gains.

It would be interesting to investigate the reading comprehension performance of the students in the Intervention Group with increasingly more complex texts with a higher degree of reading difficulty and compare results between fiction and non-fiction texts.

Gender of participants was not considered since Hattie (2009) has found that there are no gender differences in performance with a size effect close to zero (0.12). It would also be interesting to track the reading comprehension performance of the Intervention Group after long-term use of the paraphrasing strategy. Students in the Intervention Group continue to make connections with the value of learning the paraphrasing strategy. Students that previously struggled to paraphrase dictionary meanings are now able to complete this task independently and with confidence. The students are also more aware of vocabulary and are keen to learn more synonyms!

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Appendices

Appendix 1- Lesson Plans

Appendix 2- Materials

Appendix 3- Excel spreadsheet of results

Appendix 1 –Lesson Plans

Synonym/Paraphrasing Lessons

Lessons delivered to the whole class of mixed ability and gender of Grade Five/Six students. Inform students that we will be learning some strategies and skills to assist their reading comprehension. Tell them that these skills will help them to remember what they read. Tell students that we will work through a series of lessons to increase their synonym knowledge and paraphrasing knowledge. Inform students that at the beginning of the lessons the class will learn together, then in groups and finally independently. Each lesson will start with a mini synonym lesson and continue with a paraphrasing lesson. Each lesson will include reflections about what, how and why we are learning about synonyms and paraphrasing. Students will be expected to verbalise and share their thinking. The teacher expects every student in the class to experience success in acquiring and applying new synonym knowledge and the paraphrasing strategy independently by the end of the tenth lesson. All texts used have a readability Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level of 5.2.

Lessons One, Two and Three – modelled; teacher reads text aloud and models thought processes

Lessons Four, Five and Six- shared; teacher and students read text aloud together and verbalise their thinking

Lessons Seven, Eight, Nine and Ten - independent; students read text silently and work through each example independently. Teacher provides whole class immediate feedback after each example.

Lesson One- Modelled Paraphrasing

1. Brain storm definition of the word 'synonym' and come to agreed class definition. Place definition on display.

Synonym- a word that means the same as another word

2. Work through generating synonyms with five different words. E.g.
 - a) many – countless, numerous, plenty, a lot, multitude, profuse,
 - b) happy- cheerful, content, glad, merry, overjoyed, jubilant, delighted, elated
 - c) sad- dejected, depressed, blue, cheerless, dismal, down, gloomy, melancholy
 - d) big- enormous, gigantic, huge, immense, large, massive, vast, sizeable
 - e) small- little, mini, minute, petite, puny, slight, tiny, undersized, weeAsk students to say and then record all synonyms generated. Display in the classroom.
3. Introduce the term 'paraphrasing'. Discuss meaning. Write definition. Display.
4. Work through, by modelling, several sentences reminding students that the aim is to change as many words as possible without changing the meaning. All examples are in large print on the interactive whiteboard. Tell students that we will work through one sentence at a time.

E.G. 1. *Text*

As more people came to live in the area many trees and bushes were cut down. As a result, the number of birds grew less and less. The remaining few are protected.
Readability Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 5.2

e.g. 1a. *As more people came to live in the area many trees and bushes were cut down.*

Paraphrase: A lot of plants had to be removed when increasing numbers of families moved to the neighbourhood.

e.g. 1b *As a result, the number of birds grew less and less.*

Paraphrase: The amount of birds lessened because of this.

e.g. 1c *The remaining few are protected.*

Paraphrase: The law looks after the birds that are left.

E.G. 2. *Text*

Peter watched the plane until it went out of sight. No matter how hard Katie looked at where Peter was pointing, she couldn't see it.

e.g. 2a. *Peter watched the plane until it went out of sight.*

Paraphrase: Peter looked at the aircraft till it disappeared.

e.g. 2b *No matter how hard Katie looked at where Peter was pointing, she couldn't see it.*

Paraphrase: Even though Katie looked intensely where Peter was pointing, she didn't see the aeroplane.

Conclusion; Ask students to complete the sentence starter-We are learning more synonyms and to paraphrase because...

Synonyms

many – countless, numerous, plenty, a lot, multitude, profuse,	happy- cheerful, content, glad, merry, overjoyed, jubilant, delighted, elated	sad- dejected, depressed, blue, cheerless, dismal, down, gloomy, melancholy	big- enormous, gigantic, huge, immense, large, massive, vast, sizeable	small- little, mini, minute, petite, puny, slight, tiny, undersized, wee
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Lesson Two-Modelled Paraphrasing

1. Pose question to students: What is a synonym? Refer students to class definition.
2. Work through generating synonyms with five different words. Ask students to say and then record all synonyms generated. Display synonyms in classroom.

E.G. Synonyms

Beautiful- attractive fair good-looking lovely stunning appealing radiant gorgeous exquisite	Boy- lad fellow junior schoolboy youngster youth	Girl- lass miss daughter female child wench schoolgirl	Dog- canine hound mongrel man's best friend puppy mutt pooch	Cat- feline mouser moggy puss pussycat tabby
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3. Pose questions to students. What is paraphrasing? Why do you think it is useful to paraphrase when reading?
4. Work through, by modelling, several examples reminding students that the aim is to change as many words as possible without changing the meaning. Tell students that we will work through one sentence at a time.

E.G. 1. Text

Not everyone loves balloons. Some people who care greatly about the planet say that balloons turn into ugly litter that doesn't decay easily. Animals can die if they eat the remains of balloons.

Readability Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 5.2

1a *Not everyone loves balloons.*

Paraphrase: Not all people like balloons.

1b. *Some people who care greatly about the planet say that balloons turn into ugly litter that doesn't decay easily.*

Paraphrase: Environmentalists claim that balloons become rubbish that doesn't decompose.

1c. *Animals can die if they eat the remains of balloons.*

Paraphrase: Balloon rubbish can be fatal to wildlife.

E.G. 2 Text

Miranda saw many animals on the farm. She was allowed to climb into the pen with the calves. Donald held her up to pat the horse's nose. She was a bit scared when she saw the large pig, but thought the piglets were cute.

2a. *Miranda saw many animals on the farm.*

Paraphrase: Miranda observed a lot of creatures on the ranch.

2b. *She was allowed to climb into the pen with the calves.*

Paraphrase: She was given permission to enter the enclosure with the baby cows.

2c. *She was a bit scared when she saw the large pig, but thought the piglets were cute.*

Paraphrase: She was frightened by the size of the sow but considered the baby pigs adorable.

Conclusion- How does learning more synonyms help with paraphrasing? Discuss.

Lesson Three-Modelled Paraphrasing

1. Pose question to students: What is a synonym? Refer students to class definition.

2. Work through generating synonyms with five different words.

E.G. Synonyms

House- abode building dwelling household structure home residence homestead	Nice- agreeable amiable attractive charming good kind polite pleasant	Jump- bounce bound caper hop hurdle leap skip spring vault	Dress- costume ensemble frock gown garment outfit clothes clothing apparel	Horrible- abhorrent appalling awful dreadful fearful horrid ghastly grim/repulsive grisly/revolting gruesome hideous/loathsome
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Ask students to say and then record all synonyms generated. Display in the class.

3. Work through, by modelling, several sentences reminding students that the aim is to change as many words as possible without changing the meaning. Inform students that we now going to use what we are learning about synonyms to paraphrase. Why are we learning to paraphrase?

E.G. 1. *Text*

If you keep ducks you will need to provide them with water. Water is important to ducks for drinking and finding food in. From the water they will eat things such as water plants and frogs. They don't spend all their time in the water though. Ducks will also patrol your garden and eat the slugs, snails and worms. This makes them very useful, as these creatures are pests.

Readability Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 5.2

1.a *If you keep ducks you will need to provide them with water.*

Paraphrase: Kept ducks need water.

2.b. *Water is important to ducks for drinking and finding food in.*

Paraphrase: Ducks must have water for drinking and for seeking food.

2.c. *From the water they will eat things such as water plants and frogs.*

Paraphrase: Ducks eat water plants and frogs from the water.

2.d. *They don't spend all their time in the water though.*

Paraphrase: Not all of the duck's day is spent in a pond.

2.e. *Ducks will also patrol your garden and eat the slugs, snails and worms.*

Paraphrase: They like to hunt for mini beasts on your grounds.

2.f. *This makes them very useful, as these creatures are pests.*

Paraphrase: Ducks are helpful because some mini-beasts are a nuisance.

Re-read paraphrased paragraph. Compare the two paragraphs. Ask students if the meaning has been retained. What have we learned about synonyms and paraphrasing?

Lesson Four- Paraphrasing in Small Groups

Focus Questions: What is paraphrasing?

How might paraphrasing help with reading comprehension?

1. Working in mixed ability small groups students brain storm and record synonyms for the following words:
 - picture: image, depiction, portrait, photograph, photo, print, sketch
 - throw: fling, toss, chuck, hurl, bowl, pitch, heave, lob, cast
2. Discuss acceptable answers and write on whiteboard.
3. Discuss unacceptable answers.
4. Display text to be paraphrased. Students and teacher read text aloud together. Working in pairs ask students to use their synonym knowledge to paraphrase the following sentence:

Text: E.G. 1

An animal bit him on the hand when he reached through a fence at the zoo.

Readability Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 5.2

Paraphrase: When the boy put his hand inside the railing at the wildlife sanctuary it was bitten by a creature.

5. Write up some of the responses and discuss.
6. Working in pairs ask students to use their synonym knowledge to paraphrase the following sentence:

Text: E.G. 2

The town had waited for the weather to improve before they could have their fund raising day.

Readability Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 5.2

Paraphrase: The fund raising day was held after the city waited for better weather.

7. Write up some of the responses and discuss.
8. In conclusion ask students what they found easy and what they found challenging when they tried to paraphrase.

Lesson Five- Paraphrasing in Small Groups

Focus Questions: How might paraphrasing help with reading comprehension?

1. Working in mixed ability small groups students brain storm and record synonyms for the following words:
Pen-ball point, biro, fountain pen, marker, felt tip, highlighter, writing implement
Bed-divan, bedstead, couch, double bed, single bed, twin bed, bunk bed, cot, camp bed
2. Discuss acceptable answers and write on whiteboard.
3. Discuss unacceptable answers.
4. Display text to be paraphrased. Students and teacher read text aloud together. Working in pairs ask students to use their synonym knowledge to paraphrase the following:

Text: E.G.1

The empty boxes were stacked by our gates ready to be collected. If there had been a strong wind they would have been blown away.

Readability Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 5.2

Paraphrase: The vacant containers were piled beside the doors to be picked up. If the weather became blustery the containers would be swept away.

5. Write up some of the responses and discuss.
6. Working in pairs ask students to use their synonym knowledge to paraphrase the following:

Text: E.G. 2

Many thousands of pine trees had been planted on the rolling hills. They were also planted on the steeper slopes and in the gullies.

Readability Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 5.2

Paraphrase: Tens of thousands of pines were planted on the hilly countryside. The trees were even on the sheer slopes and valleys.

7. Write up some of the responses and discuss.
8. Ask students what they found easy and what they found challenging when they tried to paraphrase.

Lesson Six- Paraphrasing in Small Groups

Focus question: What do you need to do to paraphrase? What processes go through your head?

1. Working in mixed ability small groups students brain storm and record synonyms for the following words:
Horse- mount, stallion, mare, pony, steed, foal, charger
Work- labour, employment, job, vocation, occupation, career
2. Discuss acceptable answers and write on whiteboard.
3. Discuss unacceptable answers.
4. Display text to be paraphrased. Students and teacher read text aloud together. Working in pairs ask students to use their synonym knowledge to paraphrase the following:

Text: E.G. 1

The eighteen –wheeled truck was building up speed. Eric always enjoyed doing this. For fifty kilometres the road was flat with long straights-only six easy bends over the whole distance. Here he could make up for the time he'd lost. On the first straight Eric passed one truck and two cars going the other way. Apart from that the road was empty the whole way although every now and then there were the lights of farmhouses. Eric felt that there was no-one else in the world. He liked the feeling.
Readability Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 5.2

Paraphrase:

The many-wheeled lorry built up speed. Eric loved it. Most of the fifty-kilometre road was flat and straight except for six simple turns. Eric could make up lost time on the flat and straight part of the road. He passed three other vehicles going in the opposite direction. Those were the only vehicles he saw on the clear road. Sometimes he saw the lights of homesteads. Eric enjoyed the feeling of there being no-one else on the Earth.

5. Write up some of the responses and discuss.
6. Read through paraphrased text and compare to original text. Has the meaning been retained?
7. Ask students what they found easy and what they found challenging when they tried to paraphrase a longer text. What did they do? How did they do it? Why did they make the synonym choices that they did?

Lesson Seven- Paraphrasing independently

Focus question: What do you have to remember to do to paraphrase?

1. Each student generates and records synonyms for the following words independently:
Phone- telephone, handset, headset, receiver, touch-tone phone, mobile phone, mobile, cell phone, cellular phone
Knife- blade, carving knife, breadknife, cook's knife, dagger, penknife, flick knife, stiletto
2. Discuss acceptable answers and write on whiteboard.
3. Discuss unacceptable answers.
4. Display text to be paraphrased. Ask each student to use their synonym knowledge to paraphrase the following text silently by concentrating on a few sentences at a time.

Text:

One day in Italy a lion escaped from the circus where it lived. It ran towards a young boy. The boy was very scared of course and started running. The mother turned and saw what was happening. What she did next amazed everybody. She hit the lion again and again and hurt it badly. It had cuts to its head and skin and had to go to a vet for treatment.

Readability Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 5.2

Text: E.G. 1

One day in Italy a lion escaped from the circus where it lived. It ran towards a young boy. The boy was very scared of course and started running.

Discuss acceptable answers.

Paraphrase:

Once a lion ran away from an Italian circus. The lion ran in the direction of a child. Naturally the child was terrified and began sprinting.

Text: E.G. 2

The mother turned and saw what was happening. What she did next amazed everybody.

Discuss acceptable answers.

Paraphrase:

His mum twisted around and saw what was occurring. She surprised everyone by what she did next.

Text: E.G. 3

She hit the lion again and again and hurt it badly. It had cuts to its head and skin and had to go to a vet for treatment.

Discuss acceptable answers.

Paraphrase:

The mother hit the lion repeatedly and seriously hurt it. The lion had cuts to its head and body and had to be taken to a doctor to be cared for.

5. Ask students to compare/contrast the text to the paraphrased text. Has the meaning been retained?

Lesson Eight- Paraphrasing Independently

Focus statement: Ask students to complete the sentence-To paraphrase well I need to...

1. Each student generates and records synonyms for the following words:
Glass- goblet, beaker, schooner, tumbler, wineglass
Floor- ground, bottom, base, flooring, floorboards
2. Discuss acceptable answers and write on whiteboard.
3. Discuss unacceptable answers.
4. Display text to be paraphrased. Ask each student to use their synonym knowledge to paraphrase the following:

Text:

Gran and Grandpa had taken three-year-old Ashley and her little brother Blake to the zoo. Gran looked at the guide. This was a map of the zoo with pictures showing where the animals were. The lions were at the back of the zoo so would be the last animal that they got to. Some of the monkeys were swinging on ropes. Others were playing chasing games through the trees. The older grey monkeys sat or lay dozing in the sun. They reached the lions just on feeding time. Up on the warm rocks, they were relaxing in the sun. They rose to their feet when their food arrived, then raced down and leapt to the ground. Their roars echoed around the zoo.

Readability Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 5.2

Paraphrase:

The grandparents took three year old Ashley and her small brother Blake to the animal sanctuary. Grandmother glanced at the guide or map with drawings explaining where the wildlife was. They would visit the lion last because they were at the back of the park. A few of the monkeys swung on rigging. Some other monkeys chased each other in the trees. The grown-ups were either sitting or lazing in the sunshine. The family arrived at the lions just as they were about to be fed. The lions were sunbathing on warm boulders. As their food arrived, the lions got up and jumped to the floor. The lions' roar could be heard around the zoo.

5. Compare different acceptable alternatives for the text.
6. Ask students to compare the text to the paraphrased text. Is the meaning retained?
7. How has paraphrasing the text helped us to understand or remember it more?

Lesson Nine- Paraphrasing Independently

Focus statement: Ask students to complete the sentence-To paraphrase well I need to...

1. Each student generates and records synonyms for the following words:
People- persons, folks, individuals, humans, humankind, human race
Tired- weary, exhausted, worn-out, drained, dead beat, sleepy, drowsy
2. Discuss acceptable answers and write on whiteboard.
3. Discuss unacceptable answers.
4. Display text to be paraphrased. Ask each student to use their synonym knowledge to paraphrase the following:

Text

We were walking home along the riverbank. Each day all sorts of people used the path. There were joggers and dog walkers. There were bike riders and skateboarders. There were people who just liked getting out in the sunshine. There was plenty of room for everyone. At this time of day though we were the only ones on the path. We had been to football practise. Now we were on our way home in the last of the daylight. We weren't in a hurry. We were a bit tired after the practise. Kirk spotted something lying in the grass beside the path. It was a man's wallet with a lot of money in it. We put it in Jimmy's bag and kept on walking. We had almost reached the end of the path when we heard a voice calling from behind us. A very worried- looking man caught up to us. We recognised him from the photo and he was so pleased when we gave him his wallet that he insisted on giving us a fifty-dollar note as a reward.

Readability Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 5.2

Paraphrase:

A group of friends were strolling beside the riverbank to get home. This path was used every day by a lot of different types of folks. Some of these people were joggers, pet owners walking their dog, bicycle riders, skateboarders and individuals enjoying the sun. There was lots of space for everyone but at the moment we were the only ones around. At dusk we were on our way home from football drills. Kirk saw an item in the vegetation near the trail. It was a man's wallet filled with money. We placed the wallet in Jimmy's bag and continued walking. Near the end of the trail we heard a voice calling at the back of us. An anxious person approached us. We knew it was the wallet's owner because of the picture in the wallet. We handed him his wallet. He was so happy that he gave us a fifty-dollar note as a prize.

6. Compare different acceptable alternatives for the text.
7. Ask students to compare the text to the paraphrased text. Is the meaning retained?
8. How has paraphrasing the text helped us to understand it more?

Lesson Ten- Paraphrasing independently

Focus statement: Ask students to complete the sentence-To paraphrase well I need to...

1. Each student generates and records synonyms for the following words:
Ship- boat, vessel, craft, yacht, liner, cruiser, dinghy, ferry
Fearless- intrepid, brave, courageous, unafraid, daring, plucky, valiant
2. Discuss acceptable answers and write on whiteboard.
3. Discuss unacceptable answers.
4. Ask each student to use their synonym knowledge to paraphrase the following:

Text:

Huddled behind the rocks they were sheltered from the wind. The captain, who had been keeping a lookout, tapped Jack's shoulder and pointed. The young soldier cautiously rose and peered over the rocks. At the entrance of the bay he could see the ship slowly approaching the shore. The captain had his telescope to his eye.

'It's the Mary Jane sure enough,' he said. 'And there he is. Look!'

He passed the telescope to Jack. The boy had heard of the infamous smuggler for nearly all his life. He knew straight away that the tall, one-armed man he could see standing at the ship's rail must be Billy Cornfield. He could hardly believe that he was going to be part of Billy's capture. He knew that this fearless smuggler would not give in without a fighting the soldiers.

He sank down into the shadow of the rocks again.

Ten long, silent minutes went by and the captain nudged Jack. He looked up to see the ship's masts, barely moving against the sky. The smuggler's ship seemed close enough to touch. His heart was pounding.

'She's close to the rocks,' said the captain. 'He's a good seaman, Jack. Only Cornfield would risk bringing a ship of her size this far in.'

The captain signalled to the soldiers. Crouched in the shadow of the rocks, they readied their muskets.

Readability Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 5.2

Paraphrase:

Bunched together behind the boulders they were protected from the blustery weather. The leader who had been watching tapped Jack's shoulder and pointed. The junior soldier carefully looked over the rocks. At the opening of the cove he saw a vessel gradually coming towards the shore. The captain looked out of his telescope.

'It is the Mary Jane,' he said. 'And look over where he is.'

The leader gave Jack the telescope. The young man knew of the legendary thief from his earliest days. He knew that the lofty, one-armed man he spied at the handrail was Billy Cornfield. Jack was amazed that he was going to help capture this daring thief who was known to not give in without fighting.

Jack hid behind the boulders again.

Ten quiet slow minutes passed and then the captain pushed Jack. Jack looked up and saw the other ship's masts hardly moving against the sky. He felt like he could touch Billy Cornfield's ship. His heart was racing.

'The ship is close to the rocks but he is a good seaman and only Cornfield would risk bringing in a large craft,' said the captain.

The leader made a sign to the soldiers so they got their guns ready while they were hidden in the darkness of the rocks.

5. Compare different acceptable alternatives for the text.
6. Ask students to compare the text to the paraphrased text. Is the meaning retained?
7. How has paraphrasing the text helped us to understand it more?

Synonym-
a word that
means the
same as
another
word

Paraphrase-
To put into
other words

Appendix 2- Materials

Munro, J. (2010). Comprehension-Synonym Knowledge. Literacy Intervention Strategies lecture notes- Intake 17, 476 696.

Munro, J. (2010). Comprehension-Paraphrasing Strategy. Literacy Intervention Strategies lecture notes- Intake 17, 476 696.

Mossenson, L., Hill, P., & Masters, G. (2003). *TORCH Tests of Reading Comprehension*. (2nd edition). Australia: ACER

Parkin, C., Parkin, C., and Pool, B. (2003). *KEY Into Reorganisation: Key Comprehension Series*. New Zealand: Triune Initiatives.

Synonym definition displayed in the classroom.

Synonyms lists displayed in the classroom.

Paraphrasing definition displayed in the classroom.