Explicit teaching of synonyms and paraphrasing to students in Grades Five and Six students will lead to an increase in their reading comprehension

ABSTRACT

Many students who reach the upper grade levels of primary school are able to decode texts competently but experience difficulty with reading comprehension. These students are often able to read texts at an appropriate age level but demonstrate a poor understanding of the content of what has been read.

The hypothesis of this study is that explicit teaching of synonyms and paraphrasing to students in Grades Five and Six will lead to an increase in their reading comprehension. Research suggests that paraphrasing is a very effective strategy and that teaching students to paraphrase can strengthen their comprehension.

The study compared the results collected from two groups; an intervention group who were explicitly taught synonyms and how to paraphrase a text, and a control group. The results of the study indicate support for the hypothesis as the comprehension scores of the majority of the students in the intervention group showed some improvement. There was also a significant increase in the ability of the students in the intervention group to use synonyms and to paraphrase.

The results suggest that explicitly teaching the use of synonyms and paraphrasing to students to helps improve their reading comprehension.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a very important and frequently used part of our daily lives, yet it is also a very complex activity. Competent readers are able to use a number of skills simultaneously in order to decode, internalise and comprehend a text. They do this automatically and are able to work at different levels without consciously thinking about what they are doing. Proficient readers work at a word level when they read the words and phrases within a text and tell themselves what these are. They also work at a sentence level when they work out the meaning of each sentence and then, when they make links between the concepts in the text they work at the conceptual level. Readers link the ideas within a text with knowledge they have when working at the topic level and, at the dispositional level, they are able to discern what the message of the author is (Munro, 2010).

Many students who reach the senior level of primary school appear to have some difficulty with reading and comprehending texts. Some of these students experience difficulty when trying to decode the words within the text and often lack fluency. These students have trouble comprehending what they have read, as meaning has been lost due to them having to focus heavily on decoding and then recoding the words. Many of these students are working at the word level and are not making meaning of the sentences within the text. However, many other students in grade five and six are able to read texts with fluency and expression and can decode and recode words in a competent manner. To some observers it may seem that these students are successful readers – and so they would be if decoding words in a fluent manner was all that we, as teachers, were aiming at for our students. A large number of these students, although able to 'read' the text, experience difficulty when identifying the main idea of the text, retelling the events or stating what the author's intention or message is, in other words they do not comprehend what they are reading. As students progress through school reading comprehension becomes increasingly important in many subjects. Researchers have found that many students do not comprehend texts effectively despite being successful at decoding (Hagaman & Reid, (2008).

One study undertaken says that students who are experiencing trouble with reading need to be taught appropriate strategies to help them overcome the underlying problem. They state that it is very important that the reader is aware that the purpose of reading is to make meaning of the text being read, not just be able to decode it (Hedin, Conderman, 2010).

One strategy which, when used effectively, has a positive impact on the ability of a student to read and comprehend a text is paraphrasing. Study carried out by other researchers indicates that teaching students to paraphrase can improve reading comprehension of both fiction and nonfiction texts. Paraphrasing has also been found to be an excellent tool for students to use to reinforce reading skills such as identifying the main idea of a text and locating supporting details within a text. (Fisk & Hurst, 2003). They further state that paraphrasing is so effective because it involves the student using all modes of communication – reading, writing, listening and speaking – which helps the student to have a deeper understanding of the text. Other research also acknowledges the benefits of teaching students to use paraphrasing. Paraphrasing encourages the reader to make connections with their prior knowledge and to use words that are part of the reader's vocabulary. If students are aware of why and how this strategy is so effective it is more likely that they will use it automatically and independently. (Kletzien, 2009).

The present study focuses on a group of nine Grade Five and Six students. Data collected by the school indicates that Literacy results are lower than what should be expected as the school does not have ESL students, nor is it in a low socio-economic grouping. The low results in both AIM and Naplan over the past years led to the school being included in the current National Partnerships Program. All of the students involved are able to decode texts competently, but at times find it difficult to identify the main idea of texts or to retell them in sufficient detail. After investigating strategies which could help these students to comprehend texts to a higher degree it was decided to focus on synonyms and paraphrasing as these were two areas where the students did not perform well. To further assist the students to become more proficient with paraphrasing it was planned that the teacher would also introduced the RAP strategy (Schumaker, Denton & Deshler, 1984) as a way of helping them to remember what was required of them when paraphrasing. This strategy is outlined as follows:

Read the text

Ask yourself questions about the main ideas and details

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

The study will also contain a control group which will used as a means of assisting to measure any gains made by the intervention group.

As students reach higher grade levels in school there is a greater demand for them to be able read information and demonstrate an understanding of what they have read in a variety of ways. They are required to work independently as they read information from textbooks and other sources, take notes and complete tasks relating to what has been read (Boudah & O'Neill, 1999). It is hoped that by conducting this study and by explicitly teaching synonyms and paraphrasing to the selected students there will be an improvement in their reading comprehension.

The present investigation aims to extend the earlier research by examining the influence that the explicit teaching of synonyms and paraphrasing has on the reading comprehension of a group of grade five and six students.

Hypothesis: Explicit teaching of synonyms and paraphrasing to students in Grade Five and Six will lead to an increase in their reading comprehension.

METHOD

Design

This study is based on the explicit teaching of synonyms and paraphrasing to Grade Five and Six students and the effect that this has on their reading comprehension. The study uses case study OXO design. In the study the results obtained from two groups of students are compared, a control group and an intervention group. Each group consists of students from both Grade Five and Grade Six.

Participants

All students in the study are in either Grade Five or Grade Six, with all being part of two Grade 5/6 composite classes in the school. Both groups contain students who had some form of intervention earlier in their schooling. There is a mixture of males and females in both groups. No student comes from an ESL background and English is spoken at home by all parents.

Students for the intervention group were chosen after completing pretesting for synonyms, paraphrasing and comprehension. Over 50% of the intervention students had been identified by previous teachers as being 'at risk". Student Four is at present completing his second year of Grade Five, this having been a request by his parents (with the student agreeing to it). Student Six has had speech therapy assistance for four years, but has now been discontinued – in 2010. Student 8 was until recently funded for learning disabilities, but is no longer receiving this due to improvement gains which showed at a recent assessment.

Table 1

Intervention	Age – Yrs.Mths	Gender	Grade Level	Reading Recovery	Other Intervention
Student 1	11y 4m	F	5	No	No
Student 2	11y 8m	F	5	No	No
Student 3	10y 11m	M	5	No	No
Student 4	11y 10	M	5	Yes	Yes
Student 5	12y 0m	F	6	No	No
Student 6	12y 5m	M	6	Yes	Yes
Student 7	12y 0m	F	6	Yes	Yes
Student 8	11y 7m	F	6	No	Yes
Student 9	12y 4m	F	6	Yes	Yes
Percentage				**44%**	**55%**
Control					
Student 1	11y 3m	M	5	Yes	Yes
Student 2	11y 0m	F	5	No	No
Student 3	10y 8m	M	5	Yes	No
Student 4	11y 8m	F	5	No	No
Student 5	11y 11m	M	6	No	No
Student 6	12y 0m	M	6	No	No
Student 7	12y 7m	F	6	No	No
Student 8	11y 11m	F	6	No	No
Student 9	12y 2m	M	6	No	No
Percentage				**22%**	**11%**

Materials

The following materials were used for pre-testing and post-testing with the purpose of helping to assess if any growth had been made during the explicit teaching period.

- Paraphrasing Test – John Munro. To assess both pre and post knowledge of paraphrasing. Group administration.

- Synonym Test – John Munro. To assess both pre and post knowledge of synonyms. Group administration.

- TORCH Tests of Reading Comprehension – text 'Cats'. To assess the reading comprehension of students.

The following materials were used as part of the learning and teaching section of the project.

- Teaching paraphrasing lesson strategy guide – John Munro. Used as a guide when planning the teaching and learning section of this Action Research.

- Key Comprehension Series Teaching Resource, Key into Evaluation. Sentences and paragraphs used in lessons were taken from this resource.

- Key Comprehension Series Teaching Resource, Key into Inference. Sentences and paragraphs used in lessons were taken from this resource.

- Key Comprehension Series Teaching Resource, Key into Reorganisation. Sentences and paragraphs used in lessons were taken from this resource.

- RAP paraphrasing strategy, (Schumaker, Denton & Deshler, 1984). To assist students with remembering the steps to follow when paraphrasing a text.

Procedure

The teaching procedure was based on John Munro's Paraphrasing lesson outlines, (2006). The time allocation for each lesson was forty minutes; the first 10 - 15 of which was spent focusing on the explicit teaching of synonyms and the remainder (25 – 30 minutes) on the teaching of paraphrasing.
It was decided to teach both synonyms and paraphrasing after initial assessment indicated that many students were did not have a good knowledge of synonyms.
A total of ten lessons were taught (Appendix 1) and the target audience was a whole class group of Grade Five and Six students – although data from only nine of these was used for the research project. The lessons were presented in the classroom and were blocked in to the morning literacy sessions. The period of time the lessons were presented over was fourteen school days – this was due to incursions and an excursion being scheduled during this time of the year. A control group was established using students from another Grade Five / Six class in the school, and data was also collected from this group. The lessons were scaffolded to support the students in their learning, with gradual release of teacher modelling until the students were completing related activities independently. Where possible the words that were selected to be focused on for the synonym section of lessons two to ten were taken from sentences or

paragraphs used in the lesson on the previous day. This was done in order to afford extra support/scaffolding for students, especially those who have difficulty in the vocabulary area. In lesson two the teacher introduced the RAP paraphrasing strategy (Schumaker, Denton & Deshler, 1984), to give extra assistance to students when paraphrasing. In lessons one to six the teacher and the students read sentences or paragraphs aloud together, while in lessons seven to ten the students read sentences or paragraphs silently themselves. (Appendix 1)

Students belonging to the control group did not receive explicit teaching on synonyms and paraphrasing, but instead continued to participate in their regular classroom program.

All students, both those in the intervention group and those in the control group, were assessed for knowledge of synonyms, paraphrasing and reading comprehension before the commencement of the ten lesson period and again at the end. The materials and procedure for administering these assessments were the same at both times.

Tables of the data collected were constructed showing the pre-testing and post-testing scores and the averages of these. For the reading comprehension assessment TORCH Raw scores were used.

Results

The overall results of this action research project indicate support for the hypothesis that the explicit teaching of synonyms and paraphrasing to students in Grades Five and Six will lead to an increase in their reading comprehension.

Overall gains made by the intervention group of students in all areas tested were greater than those made by the control group. The students in the intervention group all made gains in all areas tested, apart from one, Student Four, who went from a raw score of 12 to a raw score of 10 in the TORCH reading comprehension test (Appendix 2, Table 4). It is interesting to note that although the students in the intervention group have experienced greater difficulties than the control group in the area of literacy over their years at school, with 44% having been part of the Reading Recovery program as opposed to 22% of the control group, and 55% having received other intervention, such as ERIC, speech therapy or individualised learning programs, as opposed to 11% of the control group, they made more significant gains overall (Table 1).

All students in the intervention group showed improvement in their knowledge of synonyms (Appendix 2, Table 2) and in most cases the scores they achieved for their Post Tests were markedly higher than those for their Pre-Tests. Although Student Six's results show a smaller gain, they are never-the-less pleasing as this student experiences great difficulty with reading comprehension, and in particular with vocabulary. Students Two and Eight in the intervention group in particular show a significant increase in their knowledge of synonyms and this has been reflected in their work within the classroom in Writing sessions since this project was conducted. One point to note is that although the students in the intervention group have more difficulties in the literacy area than those in the control group, the average of their pre-testing results for synonyms is much higher – 66.33 as opposed to 44.66 (Appendix 2, Table 2). It is difficult to know why this is the case as both classes had the same instruction during the literacy block for the year, with the teachers planning together each week. The variable that presents itself at first thought is the teacher, with each teacher obviously personalising the lessons with their own teaching style. The average of the results for post testing of synonyms – intervention group – 83.11, control group – 51.33, are also quite significant, with these showing a huge growth in the intervention group. When reflecting on the success the students in the intervention

group have achieved due to structured, scaffolded explicit teaching sessions this appears to lend support to the hypothesis put forward by this research project.

Another point of interest when looking at the data for the Synonym Post Test is the significant drop in the score achieved by Student Four in the control group. The series of tests for this group were administered by their own classroom teacher and all tests were administered in the same way each time, so this should not be a contributing factor to the score. It is not possible to fully explain the result but, as educators are aware, there can be a multitude of reasons for a student's academic achievements, and many of these are outside of the control of the classroom teacher.

The results for the synonym testing which was carried out support the hypothesis put forward by this research project, which was that explicit teaching of synonyms and paraphrasing to students in Grades Five and Six will lead to an increase in their reading comprehension. When looking at the effect size for both the intervention group and the control group it is clear to see the gains that have been made. The intervention group had an effect size score of 0.92 (Appendix 2, Table 2), which according to both Cohen (1988) and Hattie (2009) is large. This, I believe is an indicator of the success of the explicit teaching of synonyms in sessions scheduled within a short period of time. The size effect for the students in the control group was much less than that of the intervention group – 0.29, which is only a small gain.

The data collected for paraphrasing (Appendix 2, Table 3), shows that all students in the intervention group made gains in this area, with the mean average going from 18.22 (pre-testing) to 25.22 (post testing). The size effect for this area was 0.97, which is a large growth. The results for the students in the control group are very different from those of the intervention group. While some students made some gains in this area – 55.55%, others recorded lower scores for their post test – 44.44%, with the size effect for this group being -0.03. Once again it is difficult to say exactly why this occurred. All of this is appears to be more evidence which proves the hypothesis put forward by this project.

The final data set collected was for reading comprehension (Appendix 2, Table 4). For both pre-testing and post testing TORCH Tests of Reading Comprehension were used, with the selected text being 'Cats'. Once again, as with the other tests, the same text was used for both sets of testing. The scores used were TORCH raw scores. An interesting fact is that although there was a significant difference between the two groups with both synonyms and paraphrasing, the scores for the two groups for this area of testing were more alike. Eight out of the nine students in the intervention group made gains in their reading comprehension while one, Student Four, recorded a lower score for the post test. The effect size for this group was 0.36, which although small is significant, due to the short time frame in which it was achieved – 18 days including pre-testing and post testing. Students from the control group also made gains in this area with seven out of the eight recording a higher post test score. The effect size for this group was (0.28). The difference in the effect size scores for reading comprehension for the two groups is more evidence which supports the hypothesis.

Discussion

The study explored how: *Explicit teaching of synonyms and paraphrasing to students in Grades Five and Six will lead to an increase in their reading comprehension.*

The overall results of this study (Appendix 3, Table 5) lend support to the hypothesis and the research, which makes the suggestion that explicitly teaching students strategies to use when reading leads to an improvement in their comprehension levels. Students in the intervention group showed an improvement in their ability to use synonyms and to paraphrase and also showed some gains in reading comprehension. The effect size scores for this group in the areas of synonyms, paraphrasing and comprehension were at levels which appear to indicate that the gains were a direct consequence of the explicit teaching these students were exposed to for ten lessons.

Although some gains were also made by the students in the control group, these were not to the degree of those achieved by the intervention group. This shows support for the view of some researchers that explicitly teaching reading strategies to students can lead to an improvement in comprehension levels. The explicit teaching practice followed for the series of ten lessons was as presented by Munro (2006) in his paraphrasing lessons outline. A scaffolded approach to teaching reading strategies, with gradual release from teacher modelling to the student completing tasks independently is also suggested by Boudah & O'Neill (1999) and Kletzien (2009). The teaching practice followed during the study offered support for those students who needed it and taught them, in a structured way, how to use the strategies and the benefits to be gained from using them. Due to the scaffolding the students in the intervention group were exposed to the new knowledge in a supportive way which boosted confidence in themselves and their abilities. The students were very enthusiastic when learning about synonyms and paraphrasing and one reason for this may have been that they had been told in the first lesson that knowing how to use these strategies could help improve their reading comprehension levels. On more than one occasion different students enquired whether we were "doing paraphrasing" that day, and upon being told yes they reacted in a very positive manner.

The results of this study also support the belief of researchers, Fisk & Hurst (2003), Kletzien (2009) and Hagaman & Reid (2008) that paraphrasing, along with other strategies, is an effective tool for students to use to help strengthen their reading comprehension. One other strategy used with the students in the intervention group in this study was the "RAP" paraphrasing strategy, Schumaker, Denton & Deschler (1984). Many of the students in this group have experienced difficulties in the area of reading for most of their school life. This strategy provided them with an added way of remembering the steps to take when paraphrasing, and the poster explaining this strategy, which was on display in the classroom, was often referred to by the students during the lessons. In fact this poster is still to be seen being referred to at the present time by the most 'at risk' students within the group, which suggests that it is providing some form of support and promoting a feeling of success for them as they try to improve their reading comprehension.

After reflecting on the results of this study it would appear that ongoing explicit, scaffolded teaching of reading strategies would be of benefit to these students. It would also appear that the continued teaching of synonyms and paraphrasing and the use of the "RAP" strategy would lead to a further increase in their reading comprehension levels. Many of the students in the intervention group could also benefit from the explicit teaching of the skill of visualising. A final area of interest for possible further study would be the effect of explicit teaching on the self efficacy of

the students. Many of these students have low self esteem when it comes to reading and, in fact, have developed, their own 'cover up' strategies so that others will not notice if they are struggling with a task. One such example of this is Student Six in the intervention group who, if when reading aloud, comes across a word he is unsure of lowers the volume of his voice so that it is barely audible and quickens his pace. This student was very focused and engaged during the lessons taught for the purposes of the study and was always a very active contributor to the lessons. This suggests that he would benefit from continuing to be taught synonyms and paraphrasing while other strategies were also introduced and taught in an explicit manner.

Materials

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Appendix 1

Teaching and Learning Model

Number of lessons in total: 10
Time allocation for each lesson: 40 minutes
Setting: Classroom
Intervention group: Nine Grade 5 and 6 students. Lessons to be taught to whole class group.
Control Group: Nine Grade 5 and 6 students from another class.
Structure of lessons:
The teaching procedure was based on John Munro's Paraphrasing lesson outlines, ((2006) as in the lecture notes for Literacy Intervention Course 2010, Intake 17.
Each lesson to consist of 10 – 15 minutes teaching of synonyms and 25 – 30 minutes teaching of paraphrasing. Lessons to be scaffolded to support the students in their learning, with gradual release of teacher modelling until the students are completing related activities independently.
Teacher to introduce RAP paraphrasing strategy (Schumaker, Denton & Deshler, 1984) in lesson two for students to use to assist them when paraphrasing.
    Read the text
    Ask yourself questions about the main ideas and details
    Put the ideas into your own words and try to change as many words as you can
Words focused on for synonym section of lessons 2 to 10 to be taken from sentences or paragraphs from lesson on previous day where possible to afford extra support/scaffolding for students.
In lessons 1 to 6 teacher and students read sentences or paragraphs aloud together. In lessons 7 to 10 students to read sentences or paragraphs silently themselves.

Lesson 1

Introduce word 'synonym' and ask students for a definition of this. Refer to dictionary and as a class group write up a definition. Display in classroom.

Explain to the students that we are going to learn about synonyms as this is something which will help them to understand more of what they read.

Teacher to write a word on the board and read aloud with the students. Invite students to name other words which are synonyms of this word. Write these on the board next to original word to create a list.

Repeat with other words.

Words to be used in lesson and possible synonyms that may be named.

Selected Words	Possible synonyms
Small	tiny, little miniature, petite, mini
House	home, dwelling, abode, residence, cottage, shack
Car	automobile, vehicle, sedan

Explain to the students that there is something else we can learn about which will also help to improve their ability to read and understand texts. This is called paraphrasing. Go through same steps as for synonyms to establish an understanding of what paraphrasing is. Write up definition and display near synonym definition. Explain that we are going to read some sentences together and then we will say them in our own words. We will try to change as many words in the sentences as we can, but we also need to make sure we do not change the meaning of the sentence.

Teacher to write sentence on board.

Teacher and students to read aloud together.

As a class group make suggestions about words we could change in the sentence.

Repeat with other sentences.

Sentences to be used in lesson
1. The clothes flapped in the breeze.
2. The tiger looked out through the bars.
3. The children like to play indoors during the cold months.

Lesson 2

Revise definition of a synonym. Write word on board. Ask students to work in small groups to come up with as many synonyms for this word as they can. Groups then share with whole class group. Repeat with other words.

Selected Words	Possible Synonyms
Children	Kids, boys, girls, youngsters
Tiger	Cat, feline, lion, panther
Looked	Peered, saw, stared

Revise definition of paraphrasing. Tell students that there is something else we can learn that will help them when they are trying to paraphrase a sentence – introduce RAP paraphrasing strategy (outlined below).

Read the text

Ask yourself questions about the main ideas and details

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

Write first sentence on board and go through the RAP strategy with the students step by step. Record students' ideas on board under original sentence.

Write next sentence on the board and ask the students to once more use the RAP strategy to help them paraphrase it. This time ask students to form small groups of 3 and use the 'Think, Pair, Share" strategy to help them with paraphrasing. Groups to write a paraphrase of each sentence. Share with whole class group.

Repeat above step for next sentence.

Allow time for feedback and discussion with students about how and what they have learnt.

Sentences to be used in lesson
1. Tanya picked daisies from the garden.
2. The bell rang and the children ran inside.
3. Miranda saw many animals on the farm.

Lesson 3

Revise definition of a synonym and ask students to work in small groups to write some down to match the words put on the board.
Share and discuss at end.

Selected Words	Possible synonyms
Ran	Jogged, hurried, bolted, sprinted
Animals	Creatures, beasts
Rang	Peeled, sounded,

Revise paraphrasing definition and RAP strategy. Read aloud pairs of sentences on board with students. Ask students to work in small groups to paraphrase sentences. Share.

Sentences to be used in lesson
1. John climbed up the ladder and inspected the roof. Just as he had feared, a couple of tiles had come loose in last night's storm.
2. Tia pedalled hard to get to town on time. But when she got there the stores were closed.
3. By the time we reached the small village the sun was going down. After so long on the road we were glad to be able to take off our boots and rub our sore feet.

Lesson 4

Put words on board. Teacher and students to read these. Students to then independently write synonyms for these words.

Selected Words	Possible synonyms
Climb	Scramble, went
Boots	Footwear, shoes
Horse	Steed, pony, mare, gelding, colt, brumby

Revise RAP strategy. Read aloud pairs of sentences on board with students. Ask students to independently paraphrase these. Share.

Sentences to be used in lesson
1. The old bus bounced over the rickety bridge. There was a clatter as the engine cover flew off, hit the railing and disappeared.
2. As Jill worked, she hummed softly to herself. At this rate she would be finished before the kids were up for breakfast.
3. The children craned their necks and looked eagerly into the distance. When they heard the first sounds of the band they knew that, at last, the Santa parade was not far away and was coming closer.

Lesson 5

Put words on board. Teacher and students to read these. Students to then independently write synonyms for these words.

Selected Words	Possible synonyms
Old	Elderly, ancient
Work	Toil, labour
Sound	Noise, clatter

Revise RAP strategy. Read aloud paragraph with students. Ask students to form small groups and paraphrase the sentences in the paragraph. Share.

Paragraph to be used in lesson
Melissa looked back over her shoulder and saw the thick, dark clouds moving towards her. She heard the rustling leaves in the trees and pulled her new red hat down firmly on her head. The bag on her bike was still half full. Melissa pedalled as hard as she could, quickly pushing morning papers into mail boxes. At last she was almost finished. She just had to cross the bridge then make the long ride up Riverside Street. Her bag now empty, her legs tired and sore, Melissa turned her bike around. She freewheeled down Riverside Street towards home. The clouds were almost overhead but there was no rain yet, just wind. Melissa tried to grab her hat, but it had gone. She last saw it sailing over the side of the bridge. Then the rain came.

Lesson 6

Put words on board. Teacher and students to read these. Students to then independently write synonyms for these words.

Selected Words	Possible synonyms
Quickly	Speedily, hurriedly
Finished	Ended, stopped, halted
Dog	Hound, canine, pup, puppy

Revise RAP strategy. Read aloud paragraph with students. Students to work in pairs to paraphrase the sentences in the paragraph. Share.

Paragraph to be used in lesson
The group of walkers arrived just as night was falling. They were wet and cold, having walked most of the day in pouring rain. The rain had clung to the lower branches of the trees. Every now and then one of them would complain as they were slapped in the face by one of these. Now they would need to get wood from the pile at the back of the hut. "Who's volunteering?" Leo asked. "I'll do that," called Dinny. Samantha pushed the door open for him and he put his backpack inside, then went back outside. The others crowded in relieved to be in the shelter. They took off their wet boots and socks, stretching ankles and toes as they did so. Later, relaxing and warming themselves in front of the fire they planned tomorrow's stage of the walk.

Lesson 7

Put words on board. Students to read these independently & then write synonyms for these words.

Selected Words	Possible synonyms
Cold	Chilled, frozen, chilly, icy
Slapped	Hit, thumped, wacked
Walk	Stroll, amble, wander

Revise RAP strategy. Students to read paragraph independently and then paraphrase as much of it as they can. Share.

Paragraph to be used in lesson
The sun was just below the distant hills when the car's engine suddenly stopped. "Why didn't I stop and fill up?" Mum asked. She banged her hands on the steering wheel. We both went very quiet. We got out and pushed the car to the side of the road. Then we looked around. There was nothing but flat, empty land stretching towards the hills. We looked hopefully along the straight road. There wasn't another car in sight. A cold wind was blowing. We could only wait and hope. When it was dark Mum must have thought I was worried. She suggested a game of I Spy. It wasn't easy to play, so we sang some of our favourite songs. At last we saw two headlights. We couldn't believe our eyes when we saw what kind of vehicle it was. The driver winched our car up so that the front wheels were off the ground. We climbed into the cab of the truck and headed for the next town.

Lesson 8

Put words on board. Students to read these independently & then write synonyms for these words.

Selected Words	Possible synonyms
Stop	Halt, finish, end
Road	Street, track, trail, carriageway

Revise RAP strategy. Students to read paragraph independently and then paraphrase as much of it as they can. Share.

Paragraph to be used in lesson
As he walked up the path Kim was surprised to see that there was not a light anywhere, not even the flicker of the TV. He also noticed how unusually quiet it was. Toby didn't let anyone get near the house without yapping or growling.
Slowly Kim opened the door and peered into the silence. "Is..there..anybody home?" he called in a shaky voice. But there was no reply. He called again, his voice a little stronger this time. Still silence.
He went slowly into the hallway, his fingers reaching for the light switch on the wall. As soon as he pushed the switch Kim realised the power in the house was off. He stood for a while until his eyes were used to the dark. He wondered why no-one was home. Even Toby was missing.

Lesson 9

Put words on board. Students to read these independently & then write synonyms for these words.

Selected Words	Possible synonyms
Shaky	Scared, wobbly, anxious, worried
Path	Track, trail, pavement

Revise RAP strategy. Students to read paragraph independently and then paraphrase as much of it as they can. Share.

Paragraph to be used in lesson
Jemma rushed from the classroom to the row of coats and, changing her pace only slightly, grabbed hers from the peg. Awkwardly, for she was carrying her homework books in her arms, she pulled it on. She was late, she realised. Her older brother, who was giving her a ride home, got irritated when she was late. Talking to her friends after the last bell had taken more of her time than she had thought, and she had arranged to meet Joe immediately after school. She ran as fast as she could across the playground, clutching the books to her body, skipping over and around the puddles, and down the path to the road. She threw her bundle onto the seat of the car and, brushing back the wet strands of hair from her eyes, clambered quickly in after them. Joe looked at her in the rear vision mirror, and said bad temperedly, "You're late!" She smiled nervously back at him, and pulled off her coat. "Sorry, Joe."

Lesson 10

Put words on board. Students to read these independently & then write synonyms for these words.

Selected Words	Possible synonyms
Clutching	Holding, gripping
Wet	Damp, soggy, bedraggled, soaking, dripping

Revise RAP strategy. Students to read paragraph independently and then paraphrase as much of it as they can. Share.

Paragraph to be used in lesson
Fred put down the book he was reading and looked out of the window at the sports car in his yard. It was worth a lot of money. He had four more in the big shed. Then he smiled to himself and nodded. He had decided.
He didn't tell anyone what he was doing but we all knew he was 'up to something'. He spent a lot of time on the phone and even more making sure that the fence around his yard was in good order.
Then one day he arrived home with two large geese on the back of a truck. He later told me that he had learned of how, one night long ago, the ancient city of Rome had been in danger from invaders. The city's geese had made such a noise when they heard the enemy coming, that the people had woken and fought them off.
Fred's geese spent their days at the back of the yard, and had thee run of the whole place at night. Fred said they were cheaper than dogs or an ordinary alarm system.

Appendix 2

Table 2

Synonyms						
Intervention Group	**Pre - Test**	**Post Test**		**Control Group**	**Pre - Test**	**Post Test**
Student 1	84	97		Student 1	18	30
Student 2	65	107		Student 2	32	40
Student 3	59	78		Student 3	25	38
Student 4	40	60		Student 4	60	46
Student 5	63	86		Student 5	59	70
Student 6	71	74		Student 6	74	74
Student 7	68	78		Student 7	47	51
Student 8	54	100		Student 8	62	79
Student 9	57	68		Student 9	25	34
Mean (Average)	62.33	83.11		**Mean (Average)**	44.66	51.33
Average Post – Average Pre	20.78			**Average Post – Average Pre**	6.67	
Standard Deviation	29.38	15.63		**Standard Deviation**	26.86	18.42
Average Standard Deviation	22.51			**Average Standard Deviation**	22.64	
Effect Size	0.92			**Effect Size**	0.29	

John Munro's Synonym Assessment Task – Group Assessment.

Table 3

Paraphrasing						
Intervention Group	**Pre - Test**	**Post Test**		**Control Group**	**Pre - Test**	**Post Test**
Student 1	27	32		Student 1	18	17
Student 2	24	32		Student 2	19	20
Student 3	21	26		Student 3	19	21
Student 4	15	30		Student 4	28	25
Student 5	21	30		Student 5	29	27
Student 6	9	14		Student 6	30	28
Student 7	16	24		Student 7	20	23
Student 8	17	22		Student 8	25	23
Student 9	14	17		Student 9	19	20
Mean (Average)	18.22	25.22		**Mean (Average)**	23	22.66
Average Post – Average Pre	7			**Average Post – Average Pre**	-0.34	
Standard Deviation	7.93	6.55		**Standard Deviation**	16.5	3.57
Average Standard Deviation	7.24			**Average Standard Deviation**	10.03	
Effect Size	0.97			**Effect Size**	-0.03	

John Munro's Paraphrasing Assessment Task – Group Assessment.

Table 4

TORCH						
Intervention Group	**TORCH Raw Scores**			**Control Group**	**TORCH Raw Scores**	
	Pre - Test	**Post Test**			**Pre - Test**	**Post Test**
Student 1	15	19		Student 1	9	12
Student 2	15	16		Student 2	13	15
Student 3	14	15		Student 3	9	12
Student 4	12	10		Student 4	18	19
Student 5	13	14		Student 5	14	16
Student 6	10	17		Student 6	13	12
Student 7	13	14		Student 7	15	12
Student 8	15	17		Student 8	16	18
Student 9	5	8		Student 9	4	9
Mean (Average)	12.44	14.44		**Mean (Average)**	12.33	13.88
Average Post – Average Pre	2			**Average Post – Average Pre**	1.55	
Standard Deviation	7.38	3.5		**Standard Deviation**	7.62	3.3
Average Standard Deviation	5.44			**Average Standard Deviation**	5.46	
Effect Size	0.36			**Effect Size**	0.28	

TORCH tests of reading comprehension, 2nd edition. Text – 'Cats'.