

Teaching Year 4 boys from and ESL background to use synonyms and paraphrase improves their comprehension of non-fiction texts

Abstract

Many students in Year 3 and 4 are able to read texts accurately but have difficulty comprehending them. The hypothesis of this study is that teaching a group of Year 4 ESL boys to use synonyms and to paraphrase texts, will improve their reading comprehension levels of non-fiction texts. Their classroom teacher identified the students as students at risk in reading comprehension as evidenced by their test results earlier in the year. All of the students in the study are in Year 4 and they are all from an ESL background. There were four students in the teaching group and four students in the control group. They were withdrawn from their classroom and worked with me in the Literacy Room.

The program consisted of ten lessons. Each lesson was 30-40 minutes in duration and held over a two-week period. The students were tested before and after the lessons. The students were introduced to the strategy of paraphrasing and using synonyms. They practiced using the strategies with four different non-fiction texts.

The students in the teaching group made gains in their ability to create synonyms and paraphrase sentences and their self-efficacy scores improved as well, but only one of the student's comprehension levels improved. The results of this study do not support my hypothesis that teaching students to use synonyms and paraphrase texts improves reading comprehension of non-fiction texts. Further study is needed over a longer period of time to see if these strategies improve reading comprehension levels.

Introduction

Reading comprehension is a problem for many students in Years 3 and 4. They are able to accurately decode texts at an age appropriate level but have difficulty demonstrating their understanding when asked questions. There are students who read fluently and smoothly but who have comprehension difficulties (Hagaman, Luschen & Reid 2010). This may be the result of a focus on reading skills like decoding and developing fluency in early primary years and not enough time spent on teaching students comprehension skills (Hagaman, Luschen & Reid 2010).

Explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies is what is needed in the middle primary level. Research shows that teaching reading comprehension strategies explicitly can significantly improve reading comprehension skills (Hagaman, Luschen & Reid 2010). We can't expect that comprehension skills will improve in the middle years of primary by the children reading extensively. Comprehension skills could improve more if children were taught explicitly the strategies that effective readers use everyday (Dobson Scharlach T 2008). While we have known for a long time that we need to teach comprehension strategies, researchers have found that this is still not happening in classrooms everyday (Pressley, 2006; Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Mistretta-Hampton, & Echevarria, 1998; cited in Dobson Scharlach T 2008). Pilonieta and Medina (2009) also support the argument that teaching comprehension skills is not evident in classrooms even though there is research documenting its success in improving reading comprehension. They go on to argue that children who demonstrate poor comprehension use fewer strategies when reading and good readers

have a variety of strategies to choose from when meaning is lost (Dole, Duffy, Roeler & Pearson, 1991; Lenski & Nierstheimer, 2002, cited in Pilonieta & Medina 2009).

Perhaps comprehension strategies are not being taught in schools because teachers find it too challenging and they are not sure how to teach them successfully (Almasi, 2003; Hilden & Pressley, 2007; Klingner, Vaughn, & Schumm, 1998; Pressley & El-Dinary, 1997 cited in Dobson Scharlach 2008). Dobson Scharlach (2008) believes that teaching comprehension strategies to all students everyday to help improve comprehension levels is imperative. Pilonieta & Medina (2009) agree that comprehension instruction should be an everyday part of primary school reading programs. Direct instruction would include teacher modeling, scaffolded practice, explicit explanation of how and when to use the strategies and opportunities for independent practice (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Guthrie, 2002; Pressley, 2002b; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002 cited in Dobson Scharlach 2008).

Paraphrasing has been shown to have a positive influence on reading comprehension. Paraphrasing, as described by Munro (2011) is when a reader reads each sentence and then retells it in their own words, changing as many words as they can and retaining meaning. Katims & Harris (1997) agree that the paraphrasing strategy as described by Schumaker, Denton, & Desler (1984) significantly increases the comprehension skills of students with and without learning disabilities. Schumaker, Denton, & Desler (1984) noted that the more paraphrasing students did the higher their comprehension scores were. In the strategy described by Schumaker et al (1984), the mnemonic RAP is used. The students **R**ead a paragraph, **A**sk themselves what the main idea and important details are, and **P**ut the main idea and details into their own words. This approach is popular because teachers find it a practical way of implementing the strategy into classroom practice. For the purposes of this study I will be using the RAP mnemonic.

Being able to put another person's text into your own words clearly demonstrates whether you have understood the text (Fisk & Hurst 2003). When students are paraphrasing they must engage with the content of the text. Gibbons (1991) believes that reading is an active process of getting meaning from print. She says that a competent reader is someone who reconstructs a writer's message. While there are many strategies that help to improve comprehension such as visualizing, retelling and questioning, paraphrasing taught alone or with other strategies has been shown to increase comprehension levels for all students and in our diverse and changing schools this is a significant factor. Gibbons (1991) explains that comprehension of texts is trickier for second language learners as they may not be able to make predictions about the text because they may not have sufficient background knowledge or the vocabulary may be new to them. A second language learner may not be able to recognize when a text doesn't make sense. For these students, explicit teaching of comprehension strategies such as paraphrasing using synonyms is imperative as it helps them interact with the text so that they will understand it. While Lee & Von Colln (2003) agree that paraphrasing has a positive effect on the comprehension levels of students, they state that further research is required with students from varying ages, different backgrounds and reading comprehension levels.

Teaching students to use synonyms will help them paraphrase more effectively. The more vocabulary the children are familiar with the easier it will be for them to paraphrase sentences in texts. Sedita (2001) supports the idea that if students have a

limited vocabulary then it is going to be difficult for them to construct sentences in their own words. Teachers need to continually work on building students vocabulary and synonym knowledge. The students will “make connections with prior knowledge to access what is already known about a topic and to use words that are part of the reader’s knowledge” (Kletzien, S. B., 2009 p. 73).

My study will investigate whether teaching Year 4 boys from an ESL background to use synonyms and paraphrase improves their comprehension of non-fiction texts.

Method

Design: The study uses a case study OXO design, in which the ability to paraphrase and generate synonyms is examined as useful strategies for boys in Year 4 who have difficulty comprehending non-fiction texts.

Participants

There are 8 students involved in the study - four in the teaching group and four in the control group. All of the students in the study are Year 4 boys from an ESL background. The 4 boys in the teaching group all had RR intervention when they were in Year 1. Their classroom teacher identified them as students at risk as they had achieved low scores on their TORCH and PROBE comprehension tests at the beginning of the year (see Table 1). Their teacher had stated that they could all read age appropriate texts accurately but she was concerned that they didn’t understand what they were reading. The ages of the boys in the teaching group vary from 116 months to 123 months. The participant’s details are outlined in Table 2.

Comprehension Results in February

Students	TORCH raw scores February ‘The Bear who Loved to Hug’ Out of 20	PROBE ‘High Dive’ February. Out of 8
A	4	2
B	9	1
C	6	4
D	9	3

Table 1

Participants

Name	Control = 0 Teaching=1	Age in MONTHS	Gender 0=Male 1=Female	Years of Schooling	ESL No=0 Yes=1	LNSLN funding 0= No 1= ID 2= Asp 3= SLD	Earlier Intervention No=0 RR=1 Bridges=2 ERIK=3...	EMA No=0 Yes=1
A	1	116	0	5	1	3	1	1
B	1	123	0	5	1	0	1	0
C	1	123	0	5	1	0	1	0
D	1	120	0	5	1	0	1	1
E	0	118	0	5	1	0	1	1
F	0	122	0	5	1	0	0	1
G	0	123	0	5	1	0	0	0
H	0	124	0	5	1	0	0	1

Table 2

Materials

Materials used for the pre and post testing were as follows:

- TORCH – Tests Of Reading Comprehension (2005) Grasshoppers text (non-fiction)
- Paraphrasing test (Munro) Children were tested in a group.
- Synonym task (Munro) Children were tested in a group.
- Self-Efficacy questionnaire (adapted by J Munro). Children were tested individually
- I asked students individually, ‘What do good readers do?’ I recorded their responses.

Materials used for the 10 teaching sessions were as follows:

- ‘Help! Help! It’s an emergency’ Opat D, from Endangered or Extinct! The News, Horwitz Education.
- ‘Japan Rocks!’ Whitmore A, from Changing Earth, The News, Horwitz Education.
- ‘Tigers’ Rohr I, from Big Cats, Go facts Mammals, Blake education
- ‘Twister terror!’ Whitmore A, from Changing Earth, The News, Horwitz Education.
- Sentence strips and flashcards.
- Chart with the RAP strategy

The texts used in the teaching sessions were graded using the Flesch-Kincaid readability function and they were ‘Help! Help!’ Year 5.1, ‘Japan Rocks!’ Year 5.2, ‘Tigers’ Year 5.4, and ‘Twister Terror’ Year 5.4. These texts were chosen because they were non-fiction texts about topics I thought the students would have some prior knowledge of and interest in i.e. the world and animals, and because they provided opportunities for creating synonyms and restating in their own words. These students are able to decode texts accurately so I was not concerned that the texts were graded as suitable for Year 5 as the students are in Term 4 of Year 4 and because the teaching sessions were scaffolded to support the students as they learned the strategy. I used the texts in order of their readability.

Procedure

The students were withdrawn from the classroom and tested in the Literacy room. They are all familiar with this room and have worked in small groups in this environment before. The students have all worked with me before in their classroom or in a small teaching group. The tests were conducted in the following order:
TORCH reading comprehension test,
Paraphrasing test,
Synonym task,
Self-efficacy questionnaire and
Teacher/student discussions about what good readers do.

The tests were conducted over 4 sessions. Ten lessons were taught over a 2-week period. Each lesson went for 30-40 minutes and was conducted in the morning between 9:30 and 11am. There were 5 lessons in each of the 1st and 2nd weeks. Post testing was carried out in the 3rd week. The posttests were given in the same order as the pretests over 3 sessions.

In the first lesson we talked about the strategy we were going to be using and why we were using it. The RAP strategy was introduced and each step was discussed. We

played a synonym game where we matched words of a similar meaning and practiced putting sentences into our own words. We discussed the format for the rest of the lessons.

In sessions 2-10 we followed the same procedure.

Before reading 10 minutes

- Restating the procedure for paraphrasing and why we use this strategy.
- Reviewing the previous sessions synonyms and paraphrased sentences. Checking we maintained meaning and changed as many words as possible.
- Matching synonym cards from previous session and matching paraphrased sentences on strips.
- Group reading of the text (original and paraphrased) from the previous session
- Looking at new text and paraphrasing title. Looking at pictures/diagrams and discussing meaning. Asking questions about what the text is about.

During reading 15 minutes

- Teacher to read the text aloud.
- Students to read the text to themselves.
- As a group find synonyms for key vocabulary.
- Students take turns to read a sentence aloud and think of how we can say it in a different way. Students to write new sentences on strips.
- Identify the main idea in the paragraphs.

After reading 5 minutes

- Ask students ‘What did we do today while reading?’ How does this help us?
- Reflect in journals using sentence starters, ‘Today I learnt..... This helps me because.....’

In the first 7 lessons we will work together as a group and teacher will model and jointly construct paraphrased sentences and identify synonyms together. As the lessons progress the level of scaffolding will decrease and by lesson 10 the students will be required to independently identify key vocabulary and find synonyms and paraphrase each sentence into their own words maintaining meaning. (See Appendix 3 for detailed lesson plans)

Results

Students Pre and Post Test Scores

Student	Attendance	Paraphrasing PRE	Paraphrasing POST	TORCH Raw PRE	TORCH Raw POST	Self – efficacy PRE	Self – efficacy POST	Synonyms PRE	Synonyms POST
A	10/10	4	8	11	13	36	44	48	72
B	10/10	3	9	11	11	41	49	27	51
C	10/10	0	12	11	10	46	66	23	34
D	4/10	6	7	11	11	57	59	26	56
E	N/a	3	4	16	14	50	48	43	43
F	N/a	13	9	16	16	46	47	35	44
G	N/a	17	22	13	17	55	56	41	62
H	N/a	9	12	13	13	44	44	53	53

Figure 1

Figure 1 outlines the pre and post test scores for students in the teaching group and the control group in reading comprehension (TORCH), paraphrasing, self-efficacy and synonyms. It also shows attendance for the students in the teaching group.

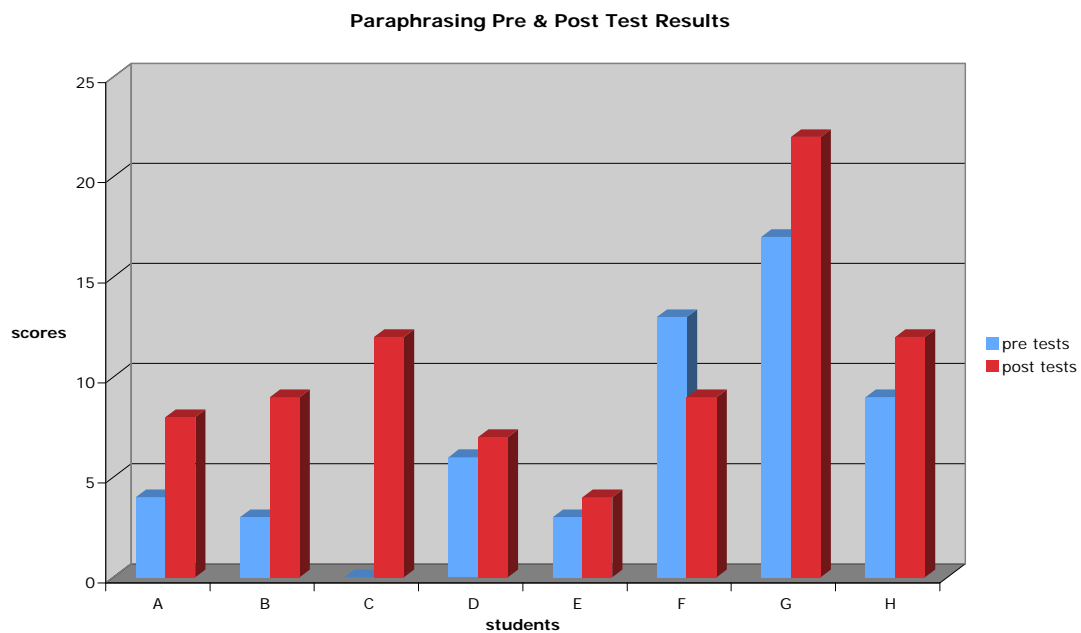


Figure 2

The test results in Figure 2 shows how the students in the teaching group and control group performed before and after the 10 teaching lessons on paraphrasing. It shows that all students improved in their ability to paraphrase sentences except for Student F who scored 13 points in the pretest and 7 in the post test. The students in the teaching group all improved in their ability to paraphrase sentences with the most notable success demonstrated by Student C who was unable to paraphrase any of the sentences in the pretest. His post test results show that he scored 12 points. Student A doubled his pre test score of 4, scoring 8 in the post test. Student B scored 3 in the pre

test and 9 in the post test, an increase of 6 points. Student D scored 6 on the pre test and 7 in the post test, which was the least improvement and could be accounted for by his poor attendance. (See Figure 1)

Average Scores in Paraphrasing

	Pre test Average Scores	Post test Average Scores
Teaching group	3	9
Control group	13	12

Figure 3

Figure 3 shows the average pre and post test scores in paraphrasing. It shows that the teaching group made greater gains than those in the control group even though the control group's averages were higher.

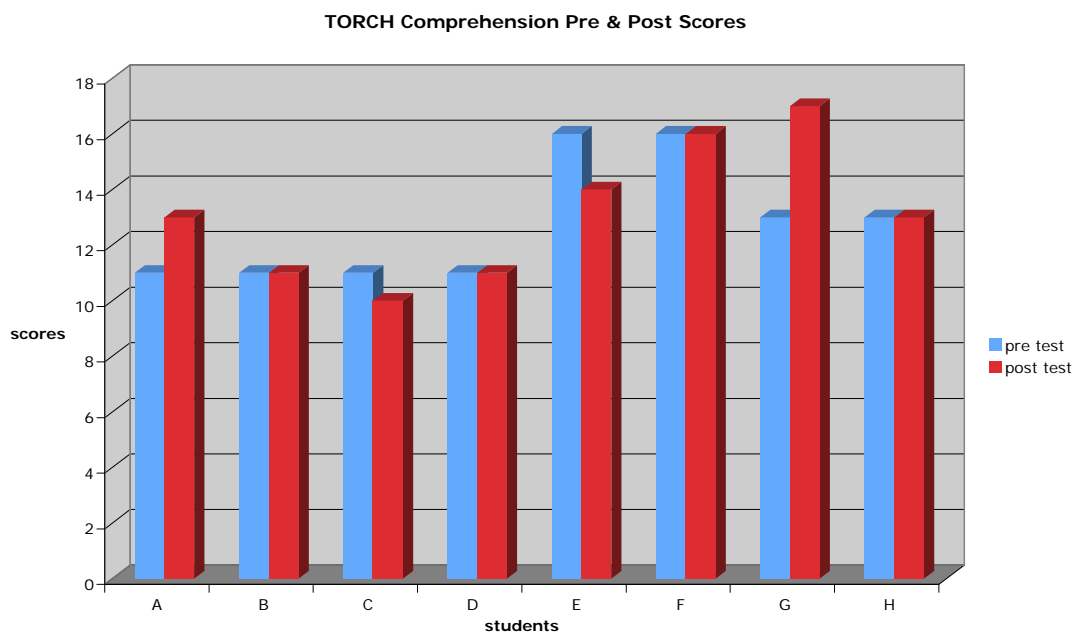


Figure 4

One student in the teaching group made gains in their comprehension posttest scores. Students B and D both scored 11 points pre and post test and Student C scored 2 points less. (See Figure 4) The same trends occurred in the control group with one student improving their comprehension score while two stayed the same and one student's score went down. This learning trend does not support my prediction that teaching students to use synonyms and paraphrase text increases their comprehension of non-fiction texts.

Average Scores in Comprehension (TORCH)

	Pre test average scores	Post test average scores
Teaching group	11	11
Control group	14	15

Figure 5

The average scores indicate that the control group made gains in their comprehension test if only by one point, where the teaching group made no gains and their average score stayed the same. It is only in the comprehension test that this learning trend is

evident. In all other tests the average scores for the teaching group were higher than the control group. (See Figures 3, 7, 9)

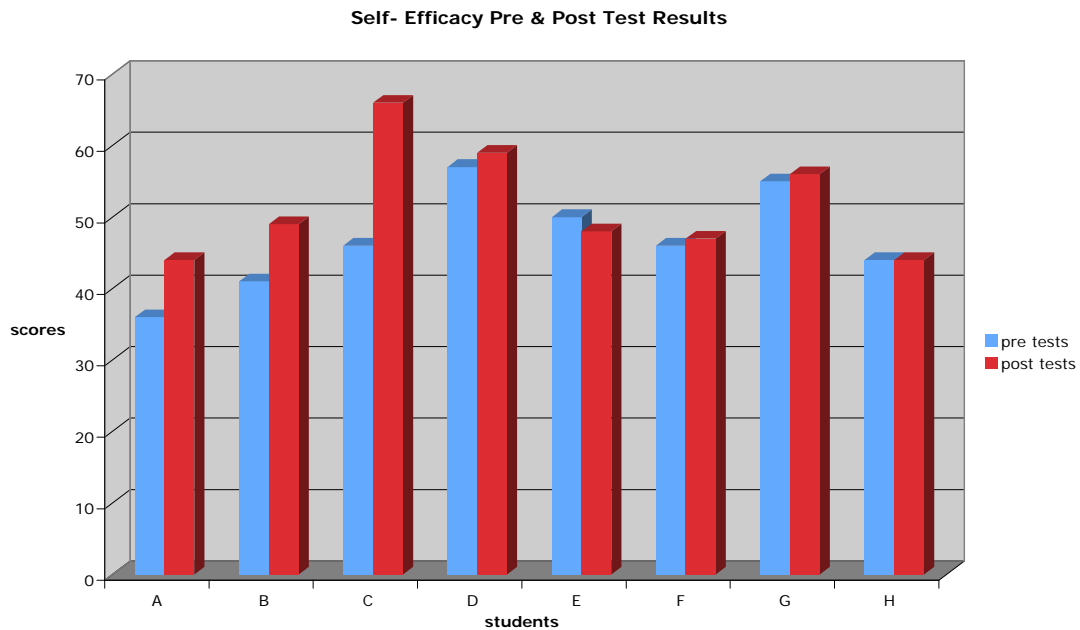


Figure 6

Average Scores in Self-Efficacy

	Pre test average scores	Post test average scores
Teaching group	45	54
Control group	49	49

Figure 7

All students in the teaching group show improved scores in the self-efficacy tests with student C demonstrating an improvement of 20 points. (See figure 6) Student D’s self-efficacy score only increased by 2 points which again could be explained by his attendance rate. (See Figure 1) It appears that involvement in the intervention group impacted on their belief in themselves as readers. The average scores in self-efficacy for the teaching group increased by 9 points while the average scores for the control group stayed the same (see Figure 7).

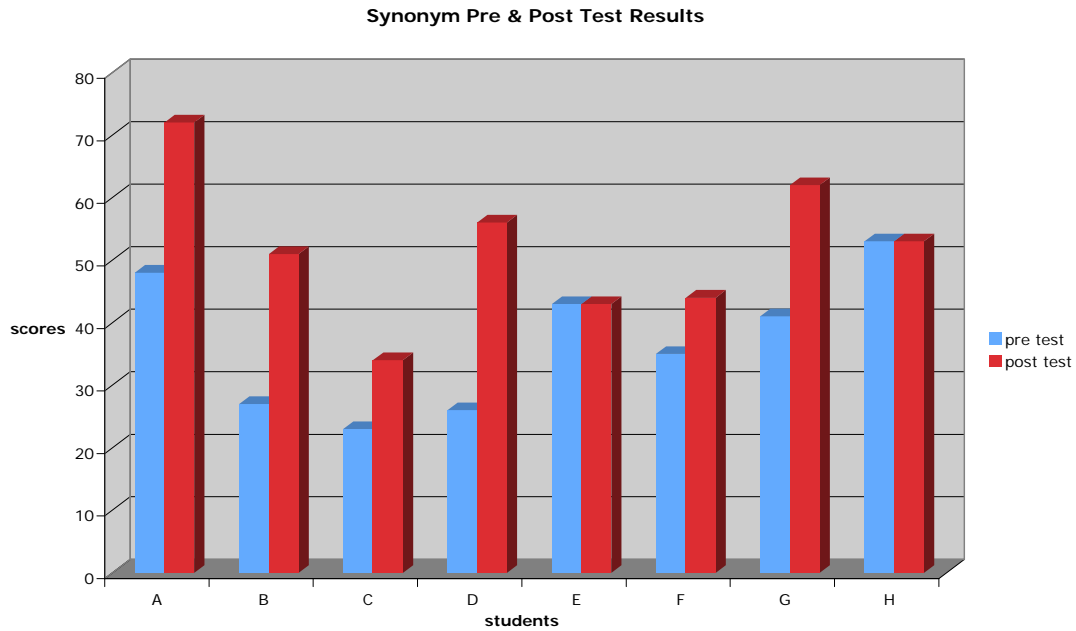


Figure 8

The posttest results in the synonym test show that all students in the teaching group showed improvement in their ability to create synonyms. (See figure 8) Student D was able to produce 30 more synonyms in the post testing which is interesting considering he only attended 4 of the 10 teaching sessions. Students A and B both produced 24 more synonyms and Student C created 11 more synonyms in the posttest. While he did not achieve the same level of success as the other students in the teaching group, he showed the most improvement in the paraphrasing test. (See Figure 2) Two students in the control group scored the same points pre and post testing, while two students made some progress. (See Figure 8)

Average Scores in Synonyms

	Pre test average scores	Post test average scores
Teaching group	31	53
Control group	43	50

Figure 9

The average scores in the synonym tests for the teaching group increased by 22 points while the control group's score increased by 7 points. (See Figure 9) The students taught to use synonyms achieved higher scores in the synonym test than those students in the control group.

Student A

Tests	Pre test scores	Post test scores
Paraphrasing	4	8
TORCH comprehension	11	13
Self-efficacy	36	44
Synonym	48	72

Figure 10

Student A is the youngest in the group and he receives funding for a language disorder. Interestingly, his results improved in all four of the tests and he was the only one in the teaching group to achieve this. He participated enthusiastically in all of the lessons especially when we focused on synonyms. He was quick to match synonym cards and to suggest synonyms in texts when we were jointly constructing new texts. Student A was not as keen to paraphrase sentences in texts independently and performed better in scaffolded learning situations. When asked in the pretesting what good readers do, Student A easily recalled strategies used when reading such as stopping when the text doesn't make sense or following punctuation. In his journal in the final lesson I asked the students to write what good readers do and he was clear that good readers understand what they read. There appeared to have been a shift in his understanding about what reading is and this was reflected in his self-efficacy results where he indicated that it mattered if he didn't understand what was being read. Student A's results support the prediction that teaching students to use synonyms and paraphrase texts improves comprehension of non-fiction texts.

Student B

Tests	Pre test scores	Post test scores
Paraphrasing	3	9
TORCH comprehension	11	11
Self-efficacy	41	49
Synonym	27	51

Figure 11

Student B's results improved in 3 of the 4 tests, scoring 11 in the pre and posttests on reading comprehension (TORCH). (See Figure 11) He worked collaboratively in the teaching group and was able to match synonyms from the previous lesson easily. He was enthusiastic about scribing new sentences in joint construction lessons. In the pretesting when I asked him what good readers do, Student B talked about reading fast and sounding out words. Like Student A, he was focused on strategies we use during reading when we don't know a word. In his final journal entry he wrote that good readers understand what they read and use the RAP strategy. He wrote that he found learning about synonyms and paraphrasing helpful because he was learning new words. However, this new understanding is not reflected in his comprehension test result where his score remained the same.

Student C

Tests	Pre test scores	Post test scores
Paraphrasing	0	12
TORCH comprehension	11	10
Self-efficacy	46	66
Synonym	23	34

Figure 12

Student C showed improvement in the paraphrasing, self-efficacy and synonym tests but scored one less point in the TORCH reading comprehension test. (See Figure 12) This student's confidence grew as the lessons progressed and this appears to be reflected in the 20 point gain in his self-efficacy score. He made progress in his ability to generate synonyms and paraphrase sentences into his own words but this was not reflected in his comprehension score. In his early journal entries Student C reflected

that he was learning about the environment and cutting down trees. His focus was on the content of the texts, not on the strategies we were learning. There was a shift in understanding in Lesson 4 where he reflected that changing sentences into our own words helps us understand better. From then on his journal entries were about the strategies we were using. In our pretest discussion about what good readers do, he said that they ‘fix words up’ and sound words out. Again Like Students A and B, he was very focused on strategies at a word level. In his final entry Student C wrote that good readers always understand the text. He reflected that the main thing he had learned about was synonyms.

Student D

Tests	Pre test scores	Post test scores
Paraphrasing	6	7
TORCH comprehension	11	11
Self-efficacy	57	59
Synonym	26	56

Figure 13

Student D showed improvement in the paraphrasing, self-efficacy and synonym tests but scored the same total in the TORCH reading comprehension test. (See Figure 13) He attended 4 out of the 10 lessons, which would appear to have impacted on his results. In the 4 sessions he did participate, he was focused and willing to take risks with creating synonyms for new words. He was keen to act as scribe when forming new sentences. He made most progress in his use of synonyms, writing 30 more synonyms in the posttest, however he made the least gains in the other test results for the teaching group. (See Figure 1) In the pretest discussion about what good readers do, Student D talked about reading fast, stretching out words, changing your voice for exclamation marks and talking marks. He was quick to recall the ‘during reading’ strategies as the other students in the teaching group did. In his journal entries he reflected that he had learnt about synonyms and this helped him learn new words. He also wrote about paraphrasing and accurately described what it is. In the four lessons he did attend it appears that Student D understood what synonyms and paraphrasing are and was able to recognize how these strategies could help his learning. His results would have been interesting had he attended all ten lessons. Student D’s results do not support the prediction that learning to use synonyms and paraphrase texts improves comprehension of non-fiction texts.

The students in the control group gave similar responses to those in the teaching group when asked, ‘What do good readers do?’ They talked about strategies they use such as rereading when the text doesn’t make sense or checking punctuation. All students were able to give several suggestions about what good readers do. Interestingly, Students F said that good readers imagine what they are reading and Student H thought that good readers make pictures in their mind and read confidently.

Discussion

The students in the teaching group all made gains in their ability to create synonyms and paraphrase non-fiction texts as demonstrated by their results in the synonym and paraphrasing tests. Student A made gains in his comprehension score as well as the other tests supporting my prediction that teaching students to use synonyms and paraphrase texts improves reading comprehension levels in non-fiction texts. The other student's results in the teaching group do not support the prediction. While they improved in what had been explicitly taught over the ten lessons, this new knowledge did not transfer to further gains in comprehension. In the lessons, they performed at their best when we worked together jointly constructing new texts and matching vocabulary with their synonyms. As a group they were able to orally retell the main ideas in the texts, ask questions and put the text into their own words. However, when they were faced with the comprehension task of reading a text and completing the cloze activity to demonstrate their understanding independently, without scaffolding, it would appear they did not use the strategies they had been taught explicitly over the ten lessons to help them. The results support what Dobson Scharlach (2008) and Pilonieta & Medina (2009) suggested that these students need further practice using these strategies and other comprehension strategies such as visualizing and retelling, consistently and frequently as part of everyday classroom practice. It also supports what Collins, A. Brown, J. S. & Newman, S.E (1989) say that there are students who have knowledge of the skills for comprehending texts but who do not use them during reading. These students perform well when tested on the specific skills but do not transfer this knowledge to new situations and often do poorly in comprehension tests.

Using the RAP mnemonic was a useful teaching tool as it helped the students remember the steps in paraphrasing as suggested by Katims and Harris (1997). We revised the steps each lesson referring to the chart with the mnemonic written up on it. In their journals two of the students referred to the RAP strategy as being something new they had learnt. With continued practice using the mnemonic, the students could use it to help them when faced with an unfamiliar text and make it part of everyday practice.

During the lessons we had many discussions about gaining meaning from texts and how the strategies we were learning about would help us understand texts. These discussions and the strategies that we studied explicitly appear to have impacted on the student's self-efficacy as evidenced by the results. It could be interesting to further investigate how explicit explanation of why we are learning strategies as well as when we might use them impacts on student self-efficacy and on comprehension levels. We didn't spend enough time discussing when and how we could use the strategies in other contexts. We could have looked at some NAPLAN texts and discussed what we can do when we are faced with these texts. It could have been helpful to talk about a variety of situations when we are faced with new and unfamiliar texts and how paraphrasing and using synonyms might help us. This may have had an impact on their results. This could be done with the whole class during Shared Reading time.

In our school we work hard to support the children by carefully scaffolding their learning. It could be helpful to look at the Collins model of teaching and learning (Collins et al 1989) in our professional learning team meetings and ensure that we are working through each stage and allowing opportunities for the students to practice using these strategies independently. It is then that the transference of knowledge and

skills can take place into new learning situations. While the students worked with their peers and me in a collaborative way, they were able to achieve the aim of paraphrasing texts into their own words and they demonstrated comprehension of the texts. When it came to applying the knowledge of the skills they had been using without any scaffolding, it appears they had difficulty. As Duke & Pearson et al (2002) suggested the students need to be told explicitly how and when to use the strategies and be given opportunities for independent practice. Further investigation into the Collins model of teaching and learning (1989), particularly the responsibility of the teacher, could be a focus for our team meetings and collaborative planning.

As Gibbons (1991) suggests, it can be difficult for second language learners to understand texts if they are unfamiliar with topic and vocabulary. This could be the situation with these students. While all of the students in the study are second language learners, the students in the teaching group were identified as students at risk in reading comprehension and the students in the control group all displayed higher levels of reading comprehension in the pretesting. The explicit teaching of 'before reading', 'during reading' and 'after reading' strategies is crucial for these students. These students need to automatically pull out the strategies that will help them make sense of an unfamiliar text like those they are faced with in the NAPLAN tests. In planning sessions in our school we could ensure that we build in these strategies as part of everyday classroom practice to ensure our students are improving in their reading comprehension. This would also support the work being done in the Reading Recovery Program. All of the students in the teaching group had received Reading Recovery Intervention in Year 1. (See Table 2) They know the strategies to use when they come to a word they don't know and they know that that reading has to make sense. It would appear that now what is needed is explicit teaching of comprehension strategies such as visualizing, paraphrasing and retelling.

I noticed throughout the lessons that the students had difficulty generating synonyms at times. Student B was most willing to take risks and have a go but Student C was often unsure of the meaning of the vocabulary, which hindered his ability to create synonyms. I believe he became more confident as the lessons progressed and contributed more ideas in lessons 6-10. All of the students were able to match the vocabulary with the synonyms in the 'before reading' tasks easily. They appeared to enjoy learning and recalling new vocabulary. As Sedita (2001) suggested, a focus on building vocabulary and synonyms is important for these students because it is very difficult for them to paraphrase sentences into their own words if they have a limited vocabulary.

The results of my study support the ideas of Lee and Van Colln (2003) who suggest that further research is needed particularly with students from varying ages, different backgrounds and reading comprehension levels. Research in this area could involve a bigger group of second language learners in Years 3 and 4 over a longer period of time. It would be interesting to compare ESL learners and native speakers in a study.

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Resources

Children’s texts

- Help! Help! It’s an emergency. Opat D, from Endangered or Extinct! The News, Horwitz Education.
- Japan Rocks. Whitmore A, from Changing Earth, The News, Horwitz Education.
- Tigers, Rohr I, from Big Cats, Go facts Mammals, Blake education
- Twister Terror, Whitmore A, from Changing Earth, The News, Horwitz Education.

Paraphrasing Test, Munro J (2011) from lecture notes
 Synonym Task, Munro J (2005)
 Self-Efficacy Questionnaire, adapted by Munro J (2002)

Appendix

Appendix 1

Participant's details

Name	Control = 0 Teaching=1	Age in MONTHS	Gender 0=Male 1=Female	Years of Schooling	ESL No=0 Yes=1	LNSLN funding 0=No 1=ID 2=Asp 3=SLD	Earlier Intervention No=0 RR=1 Bridges=2 ERIK=3...	EMA No=0 Yes=1
A	1	116	0	5	1	3	1	1
B	1	123	0	5	1	0	1	0
C	1	123	0	5	1	0	1	0
D	1	120	0	5	1	0	1	1
E	0	118	0	5	1	0	1	1
F	0	122	0	5	1	0	0	1
G	0	123	0	5	1	0	0	0
H	0	124	0	5	1	0	0	1

Appendix 2

Pre and Post Test Results and Attendance

Student	Attendance	Paraphrasing PRE	Paraphrasin g POST	TORCH Raw PRE	TORCH Raw POST	Self – efficacy PRE	Self – efficacy POST	Synonyms PRE	Synonyms POST
A	10/10	4	8	11	13	36	44	48	72
B	10/10	3	9	11	11	41	49	27	51
C	1010	0	12	11	10	46	66	23	34
D	4/10	6	7	11	11	57	59	26	56
E	N/a	3	4	16	14	50	48	43	43
F	N/a	13	9	16	16	46	47	35	44
G	N/a	17	22	13	17	55	56	41	62
H	N/a	9	12	13	13	44	44	53	53

Appendix 3

Lessons 1-10

The following 10 lessons aim to develop the use of the paraphrasing strategy and synonyms to improve reading comprehension of non-fiction texts.

Lesson 1

Before reading

Explain to students that we are learning a new strategy called Paraphrasing. This strategy helps us understand what we are reading. Paraphrasing is when we read a text and think about the main idea. Then we look at each sentence and change as many words as we can without changing the meaning. Introduce the RAP mnemonic on a large chart. Go through the 3 steps in the RAP mnemonic:

Read the text.

Ask yourself questions about the main idea and details.

Put each sentence into your own words without changing the meaning.

Practice changing words in a sentence. E.g. The boy was riding his bicycle. Mary shifted to a new town. Together think of new synonyms for the key words in each sentence. Discuss if we have changed the meaning.

During reading

Introduce the new text '**Help! Help! It's an emergency**'.

Look at heading, subheading and photos and make predictions.

Teacher will read through the text as the children follow.

The students will then read the text to themselves.

Students to read each sentence aloud.

Together we will go through the first 2 steps in the RAP chart.

After reading

Ask students 'What did we learn about today? How does this help us?'

Reflect in journals using sentence starters, 'Today I learnt..... This helps me because.....'

Lesson 2

Before reading

Revise the strategy. Discuss how this strategy can help us. Go through the RAP chart together.

Retell as a group what the text '**Help! Help! It's an emergency**' is about. What are the main ideas and details?

Give students cards with some of the key words from the text and ask them to match these words with their **synonyms**- *share/split/divide, environment/natural world, plants/flora/vegetation, animals/fauna, habitat/home/surroundings/territory, large/big/huge, drained/dried up, houses/homes/dwellings, dammed/blocked/walled, electricity/power/energy, decreasing/lessening, destroy/ruin, turned/changed, survive/live on/stay alive/last, pollute/contaminate, shelter/housing, depend/rely, society/people, rubbish/waste, oceans/seas, lakes/ponds, cleared/demolished, destroyed/wiped out/devastated.*

During reading

Students to reread the text themselves.

Students to read each sentence aloud.
Teacher to model writing new sentences on the Interactive White Board (IWB).
Check to see if we have maintained meaning.
Students to write the new sentences on strips.

After reading

Ask students ‘What did we learn about today? How does this help us?’
Reflect in journals using sentence starters, ‘Today I learnt..... This helps me because.....’

Lesson 3

Before reading

Go over the strategy and discuss why we use it. Students match strips of the original text with strips of the paraphrased text for ‘Help! Help! It’s an emergency’. Ask ‘Did we maintain meaning?’
Students match key vocabulary with their synonyms. Discuss other words we could use that have a similar meaning. Write these words on cards.

During reading

Students read the text silently.
Students to read each sentence aloud.
Teacher to model writing the sentences in another way maintaining meaning.
Encourage students to contribute their ideas. Check if we have maintained meaning and if the grammatical structures are accurate. Finish paraphrasing, ‘**Help! Help! It’s an emergency**’ Read the original and paraphrased text together.

After reading

Ask students ‘What did we learn about today? How does this help us?’
Reflect in journals using sentence starters, ‘Today I learnt..... This helps me because.....’ Ask students to also reflect on what good readers do.

Lesson 4

Before reading

Revise strategy and the RAP mnemonic. Discuss if the mnemonic is helpful.
Why/Why not? Introduce new text, ‘**Japan rocks!**’ Look at the title only. Make predictions about the text. Show students the picture from the text and ask them to review their predictions. Give students some vocabulary from the text and ask them to think of **synonyms**- *underneath/below, directly/exactly, twitch/jerk, tremble/shake, strikes/hits/attacks, destroyed/demolished/damaged, results/outcomes/consequences, Earth/world/planet, visit/go to/stay, move/shift/stir, plates/segments/slabs, crust/outer layer/shell, rub/scrape, devastating/shocking, place/spot/site/location, major/key/great, experts/authorities*
Write the vocabulary and synonyms on IWB.

During reading

Teacher to read the text to the students.
Students to read the text silently.
Discuss main ideas and details in each paragraph.
Students to read each sentence aloud. Teacher and students to jointly construct new sentences as a group.

After reading

Ask students ‘What did we learn about today? How does this help us?’

Reflect in journals using sentence starters, ‘Today I learnt..... This helps me because.....’ Ask students, ‘Do you have any new ideas about what good readers do?’

Lesson 5

Before reading

Revise the strategy. Discuss how this strategy can help us. Go through the RAP chart together.

Retell as a group what the text ‘Japan rocks!’ is about. What are the main ideas and details? Ask students to drag and match key words and synonyms from Lesson 4.

Look at new sentences from lesson 4. Reread each original and paraphrased sentences and check that meaning has been maintained.

During reading

Students read the text silently.

Read each sentence aloud. Continue to jointly construct sentences together as a group.

Each student takes turns to scribe sentences on the IWB. The group supports each other with synonyms, spelling and grammar.

Read the original and paraphrased text sentence by sentence and check if meaning has been maintained.

After reading

Students to reflect in their journals, using the sentence starters if they wish. Students may wish to draw a cartoon or pictures to demonstrate what they have learnt. Ask if any students would like to share their entries.

Lesson 6

Before reading

Go over the strategy and discuss why we use it. Students match strips of the original text ‘Japan rocks!’ with strips of the paraphrased text. Ask ‘Did we maintain meaning?’

Students match key vocabulary with their synonyms. Discuss other words we could use that have a similar meaning. Write these words on cards.

Introduce new text, ‘**Tigers**’. Look at title and pictures and have students ask questions about the text i.e. Where do tigers live? What do tigers eat? How fast can tigers run? Discuss what type of text they think it is and why.

Match vocabulary and **synonyms** -*largest/biggest, live/reside, marsh/swamp, prey/hunt, hunt/chase, large/big/strong, strong/powerful, agile/nimble, stalk/follow, swift/quick, slowly/gradually, pounce/leap, mainly/mostly, night/dark, solitary/lonely, cub/young tiger, leave/go away, territory/land/area, share/divide/split, species/types/kinds/sorts.*

During reading

Teacher reads text ‘Tigers’ to students. Discuss main ideas and details of text.

Students read text silently.

Students read each sentence in the first paragraph aloud and jointly construct new sentences changing as many words as possible while maintaining meaning.

Check to see if meaning was maintained and new structures are grammatically correct.

After reading

Ask students to reflect on what they learnt today. Students may demonstrate their learning in any way in their journal. Ask students what questions they are asking themselves about using this strategy in future. e.g. How could I use this strategy when I am in secondary school? Could I use this strategy with other texts?

Lesson 7

Before reading

Retell the main ideas in the text '**Tigers**'. Discuss how pictures, titles, subtitles help us understand texts. Students match synonyms on cards from Lesson 6. Review original and paraphrased sentences from the text from Lesson 6. Did we retain meaning?

During reading

Students read the text silently.

Read each sentence aloud in the next paragraph. Continue to jointly construct 2 sentences together as a group. Each student takes turns to scribe sentences on the IWB. The group supports each other with synonyms, spelling and grammar. Students independently paraphrase 2 sentences and share.

Read the original and paraphrased text sentence by sentence and check if meaning has been retained.

After reading

Revise what we did today and why we use this strategy. Ask students, 'What do we do when we paraphrase?' Students reflect in their journals and share with a partner.

Lesson 8 - 10

The students now practice using the strategy with new text '**Twister terror!**'. We will review the strategy using the RAP chart. Identify vocabulary and **synonyms** e.g. *boiling/scorching/roasting/sweltering, charge/attack/stampede, described/explained, huge/massive/enormous, ripped/tore/sped/rushed, hid/took cover, luckily/fortunately/happily, racing/speeding, ahead/in front of, pulled up/stopped/parked, closer/nearer, hit/strike, screamed/shouted/yelled, jumped/leapt/hopped, outrun/escape/get away from, lifted/raised, torn/ripped, died/passed away, disaster/catastrophe*. Write these on cards and play a matching game. Discuss new text title, pictures and ask questions about the main ideas and details.

- Teacher will read the text aloud, and then students will read the text silently.
- Students will read each sentence and put the main ideas and details into their own words.
- Students will read each sentence to check if they have retained meaning.
- Students will reflect in their journals.