

**Teaching year two students with English as a second language the strategy of paraphrasing improves their comprehension of fiction texts.**

**Abstract**

Many students in junior primary school have learnt to become good decoders of text and have high levels of reading accuracy, however they lack the skills to comprehend what they read beyond a literal level. This is possibly caused by the lack of emphasis placed on teaching comprehension strategies in the early years of schooling.

This study examined the effect of teaching year two students with English as a second language the strategy of paraphrasing with the objective to improve their levels of comprehension of fiction texts. The participants of the study displayed good decoding skills and reading accuracy of an age appropriate level, however they were identified as being below average in their comprehension of texts.

Research on the effectiveness of teaching the paraphrasing strategy supports its use in increasing levels of reading comprehension.

The study compared the results of two groups of students; a control group and an intervention group. The intervention group were withdrawn from their regular classroom and instruction on the paraphrasing strategy was taught over a series of ten lessons. The results support explicit teaching of the paraphrasing strategy as a means of improving the comprehension of fiction texts among students of an ESL background.

## **Introduction**

Learning to read and is an ongoing and complex process. Many strategies are taught to early and middle primary school students in mainstream classrooms to enable them to acquire the necessary skills to read and comprehend texts. The ultimate goal of reading texts is to gain meaning for different purposes – enjoyment, to learn or discover new information.

So where does this complex process of learning to read begin? Munro (2011) states that, “Reading begins with what we know”. He explains that we begin to interpret what we read by using our existing knowledge. To comprehend the text however, we must “use what we know in various ways and act on the text in particular ways”. (p. 6). He explains the way readers process text in the ‘multiple levels of text processing’ (MLOTP) model. Within the model, reading is described as working on information at a number of levels. Each level of processing is non-sequential and includes word, sentence, conceptual, topic and dispositional levels of text. Therefore, when a reader enters a text, he/she is processing the information on various levels simultaneously. Readers use what they know first, and then access the reading strategies necessary to further unpack the text.

Gibbons (2002) cites the work of Goodman (1967) who described three kinds of knowledge which readers draw upon to gain meaning from texts. The first being semantic knowledge, that is, knowledge of the world; the second being syntactic knowledge or knowledge of the structure of the language and third, graphophonic knowledge – knowledge of letter/sound relationships. Gibbons explains that effective readers can use all three kinds of knowledge simultaneously, however if one is lacking the personal cultural experience or knowledge of a text topic as second language learners may be, then one is unable to draw upon one of the key channels for gaining meaning from texts. This highlights a challenge that may be faced by English as second language (ESL) learners when reading and comprehending texts.

In describing reading in a second language, Gibbons (2002) discusses the schema theory and cites the work of Wallace (1992) who explains that schematic knowledge or ‘in the

head' knowledge can be of two types: a knowledge of the topic and knowledge of the genre. She suggests when applied to reading, readers draw upon culturally acquired knowledge 'to guide and influence the comprehension process' (p.79). When the reader is faced with a text that does not match their own schematic knowledge, it could be assumed that difficulties will be experienced by the reader in comprehending the text or genre, and they will rely heavily on the 'decoding' aspect of reading or graphophonic knowledge as mentioned earlier. This could certainly be true of ESL learners, when reading a text that is considerably outside their own cultural experience.

When learning to read, early readers are taught strategies such as matching letters to sounds, to using initial sound and picture cues to assist them to read simple texts, whilst drawing upon what they know to assist them. As skills develop, the reader can identify letter clusters, recognise high frequency words and use strategies such as analogy or segmenting and blending to read unfamiliar words. Eventually, reading becomes more sophisticated and readers develop their skill to reading sentences, paragraphs and so on. School literacy programs place a lot of emphasis on fluency and accuracy as a means of measuring reading progress and ability, particularly in the early years of schooling. Reading ability is often attributed to reading lists of isolated words, identifying letters and sounds, and running record rate on leveled texts. Students become well equipped with good phonological knowledge and excellent decoding skills, however it has been identified by many teachers that some 'able' readers i.e. those with very good reading accuracy, experience difficulty in the comprehension of what they read. This is also evident in readers from an ESL background.

Hagaman, Luschen and Reid (2010) describe that many teachers have similar experiences relating to issues with reading comprehension in their classrooms. Many students who are referred as having reading difficulties receive intervention which 'in many cases focuses primarily on foundational reading skills, such as decoding' (p.22). They further describe how these foundational skills allow the reader to develop fluency. Teachers associate the fluent reader as one who can 'devote more of their cognitive resources to reading comprehension' (p.22). This, however, may not always be the case, 'up to 10%

of students are fluent readers who struggle to understand what they read' (Meisinger, Bradley, et al cited in Hagaman, Luschen and Reid 2010, p. 22.)

In their study on improving reading comprehension of middle school students in inclusive classrooms, Katims and Harris (1997) discuss recent research in reading and state that 'reading comprehension is influenced by understanding how readers construct a representation of incoming information' (p. 116). They have found that research has shown teaching cognitive strategies assists reading comprehension. They further explain that the goal is to process and understand information via a strategy rather than just simply learning a strategy itself. Therefore, the strategy becomes the vehicle to the outcome of reading comprehension. One such strategy they used in their study was the 'paraphrasing strategy' (Shumaker et al, 1984). Katims and Harris (1997) state that, 'the paraphrasing strategy has been demonstrated to significantly increase the reading comprehension of students with and without learning disabilities' (p.116). This statement is supported by the work of Kletzien (2009) who used the paraphrasing strategy in her study with students who had varied difficulties in reading comprehension. She found that with careful modelling and instruction on the use of the strategy, students were able to better monitor their comprehension and take the necessary steps to improve their clarity and understanding of the texts they were reading. She states that, 'each of these children benefited from practise in paraphrasing, a strategy that puts the emphasis on comprehension' (p.77). She found that the strategy also helped students to access what they already know about a topic and use this knowledge to gain a further understanding of what they are reading. From the findings of Kletzien's study we can assume that the paraphrasing strategy could be transferred to the wider curriculum to assist students in using their topic knowledge to comprehend a variety of texts.

An effective paraphrasing strategy, as described by Hagaman, Luschen and Reid (1990) is the 'RAP' strategy (Shumaker et al, 1984). This strategy uses a 3 step process to assist students in reading comprehension. Hagaman, Luschen and Reid state that 'RAP is a simple strategy that is easily incorporated into existing curriculum without taking time away from critical content instruction' (p.23). The strategy involves the use of the

acronym 'RAP' to help students remember three simple steps in recalling information and putting information into their own words as follows:

**Read** a paragraph

**Ask** yourself. "What was the main idea and details?"

**Put** the information into your own words by changing as many words as you can.

Hagaman, Luschen and Reid describe the strategy as being effective with students who have learning disabilities and those who don't, due to its flexible nature. 'From the questioning and paraphrasing, students process information for better understanding of what they read' (p.23). Fisk & Hurst (2003) noted that the use of the strategy 'is an effective tool to add to our repertoire of classroom practices intended to increase students' comprehension of text' (p. 184). They describe the benefits of the strategy including its use in upper elementary, middle school, high school and the college level to assist students in comprehending a variety of texts types.

Lee and Von Colin (2003) completed a study on the effect of instruction in the paraphrasing strategy on reading fluency and comprehension. Their findings also support the use of the strategy as showing a positive effect in reading comprehension and paraphrasing. They do however note that 'while the existing research on the Paraphrasing Strategy is promising, more studies are needed to strengthen its validity especially with diverse student populations' (p.5).

Research supports use of the strategy as an effective teaching tool in classrooms with students with or without learning disabilities, however there is little evidence that it is effective with students in the early years of schooling with English as a second language. The current study aims to examine the effectiveness of teaching the paraphrasing strategy to year two students with English as a second language who present with reading comprehension difficulties. The participants display reading fluency and accuracy of an age appropriate level, however they lack strategies to gain deeper meaning or understanding of the texts they read. Gibbons (2002) describes many ESL students as those who enjoy reading and can do so in more than one language. However, due to the challenge of learning to read in a second language, many require support in learning

literacy. She further explains that when children are learning to read, it is important that they have opportunities to develop new and challenging skills in the context of familiar or comprehensible texts. It is hypothesized that teaching year two students with English as a second language the strategy of paraphrasing improves their comprehension of fiction texts.

## **Method**

### **Design**

The design for this study used the OXO method. Reading comprehension and paraphrasing ability were monitored firstly by pre testing, teaching the paraphrasing strategy then post testing to measure gains. The study compared two groups of three students in their third year of schooling. A control group and an intervention group were used for the purposes of the study.

### **Participants**

The students chosen to participate in this study were three year two students who have English as a second language with ages ranging from 8.0 years to 8.4 years. Students were identified by their classroom teacher as suitable candidates for this study based on their reading levels (at the expected level for their age) and anecdotal notes of their comprehension of fiction texts. These notes were based on the informal questions asked by the teacher as students read and after they read fiction texts. She noted that on many occasions, students had difficulty in retrieving information and making inferences on the text. The teacher had indicated that all three students in the intervention group had very good decoding skills at a word and sentence level when reading fiction texts, but were lacking comprehension strategies. The students in the intervention group were selected based on their raw scores in the Torch reading comprehension test – a raw score of 6 or below, and text reading level – greater than level 22. Their age, gender, text level, Torch score and English as a Second Language status are shown below in Table 1.

<b>Student</b>	<b>Age in MONTHS</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>English as a Second Language</b>	<b>Text Level Pretest</b>	<b>Torch Raw Score</b>
<b>A</b>	96	Female	Yes	25	5
<b>B</b>	101	Male	Yes	26	1
<b>C</b>	98	Female	Yes	23	4

Table 1

Further tests were administered - The Paraphrasing Test and Synonym Test, to gain a clearer representation of students' reading ability. A running record was also taken to obtain the text reading level of each student. The Self Efficacy Questionnaire was administered to each student to gain insight into how they feel about their ability in reading and reading in general.

The Torch reading comprehension test was selected based on the guidelines in the manual. It was suggested that administering a test that was far too easy or difficult would not give a clear indication of what individual students could do. Based on this information, the selected text passage was 'Lizards Love Eggs' – a fiction passage which was suitable for the range of ability in Year 3 students. As the students participating in the study were in their final term of schooling in Year 2, the test was deemed appropriate. The hypothesis is testing use of the comprehension strategy on fiction texts, hence the use of a fictional passage to test students.

## **Materials**

Materials used included the following-

Pre and Post testing tasks:

- Torch tests of reading comprehension, passage A3 - Lizards Love Eggs and answer sheet
- Running Record (PM Benchmark Kit)
- Synonym Word Test
- Paraphrasing Test

### Teaching Sessions:

Five fiction texts were selected. These texts were determined appropriate for the intervention group as based on Fry's Readability Procedure.

Within the teaching unit, the following materials were used:

- RAP poster (see Appendix 2)
- Paper and pencils for recording paraphrasing tasks
- Flashcards and felt tip pens for recording synonyms
- Sticky notes
- Highlighters

### Procedure

The pretesting tasks including the Torch reading comprehension test, the Paraphrasing test and Synonyms test were administered to students in a withdrawal room, as group tasks over three sessions on three consecutive days. The Running Records were administered individually to obtain text levels as was the Self Efficacy Questionnaire.

The teaching unit was taught over three weeks, with students withdrawn from their regular classroom at the same time each day in the morning session between 10:00am and 11:00am. Four lessons were taught each in weeks one and two, with the final two lessons taught in week three. The lessons lasted in duration of approximately 40 - 50 minutes. The teaching unit was based on John Munro's model of the Comprehension Paraphrasing Strategy (2006). The RAP acronym was displayed on a poster to cue students in following the three steps in the strategy:

**Read** a paragraph

**Ask** yourself. "What was the main idea and details?"

**Put** the information into your own words by changing as many words as you can.

The Collins Model of Teaching and Learning (1989) was used as a guide to develop lessons as students work through the learning process. The six principles of the model – three of the teacher and three of the student involve both the responsibility of the teacher and that of the student. The teacher being responsible for: modeling – teacher models the



task; coaching – the teacher acts as a guide offering prompts and feedback; and scaffolding and fading – teacher provides few cues as the student becomes increasingly independent. The responsibility of the student being: articulation – the student describes what they have learnt and how they can use it; reflection – student reflects on what they know now that they didn't know before; and exploration – students explain how they can use what they have learned in new contexts.

In the initial lesson, the strategy was introduced as a way of helping readers to better understand what they read to give them an overall understanding of the objective for the unit. The strategy was modelled extensively to allow students to become familiar with the strategy and to feel comfortable in making their own initial attempts at paraphrasing. The teacher gave a brief summary of the text to allow students to access the topic and get knowledge ready. The 'RAP' poster was referred to as a guide for students to help cue them to take an active part in the lesson. Each time the teacher modelled a sentence paraphrase, she reviewed the action then allowed students to practise themselves, followed by reviewing what was learnt. The teacher allowed students to ask questions as they worked through the strategy. The first two lessons were heavily scaffolded by the teacher and the strategy was taught at a sentence level. Each step in the lesson was taught at a moderate pace to give students time to consolidate and review. The students' paraphrased sentences were recorded on the whiteboard in large text so that the teacher and students could review together. Discussion took place as to which sentences were effective paraphrases with the sentence being said another way and the emphasis on maintaining meaning. Synonyms were underlined then recorded onto flashcards for use in future lessons to assist with new vocabulary acquisition. At the conclusion of the lesson, students were asked to articulate what they had learnt orally, with the teacher providing supportive and constructive feedback for the ideas given.

In subsequent lessons, students progressed from paraphrasing sentences and pairs of sentences to paraphrasing paragraphs. Each lesson followed a similar format: read a selected passage from previous lesson and paraphrase orally; play a game with synonym flash cards; read over the steps on the RAP poster; read new passage together and

highlight key words and identify the main idea; write down key words to be changed and finally make attempts at recording paraphrased sentence or paragraph. The conclusion of each lesson was devoted to discussing or writing down what we had been learning and how this helps us with our reading. The RAP poster was referred to quite frequently in initial lessons and less often as students became more apt at using the strategy. The highlighting of key words was an important step in the process due to the ESL nature of the learners within the intervention group. Often, students indicated that particular words were new to them. The discussion surrounding word meanings and key words had an impact on their understanding of the main idea. Paired or group talk was necessary to allow students to access their schematic knowledge. Often, new vocabulary needed to be 'unpacked' in order for the group to brainstorm synonyms and in turn paraphrase effectively and maintain meaning. Teacher support was necessary, however as students progressed through each lesson, they were encouraged to become more independent in identifying key words and understanding the main idea and details within the sentence or paragraph. Students became less reliant on the teacher for support as they became familiar with the process.

In the final two lessons, teacher support was reduced to a minimum with students individually reading the new text (silently). Students were not directed to work through the paraphrasing strategy systematically by the teacher, but were asked to paraphrase a paragraph independently - the final outcome being to paraphrase at a paragraph level independently. The pace of the lesson had increased as the scaffolding had decreased. Students were expected to be familiar enough with the strategy to use it on their own and paraphrase independently.

Students in the control group participated in their regular classroom program. At the conclusion of the teaching unit, both the intervention group and control groups were assessed in the same manner as pretesting. All students were tested using exactly the same tests as administered in the pretesting to maintain consistency in results.

## Results

The results of the study indicate that paraphrasing is an effective strategy in improving the reading comprehension of fiction texts in year two students who have English as a second language.

The following results (Table 2 and 3) display the average scores of both the intervention and control groups pre and post testing, excluding the Self Efficacy Questionnaire. In the pre-test results we can see a marked difference in average scores between the intervention and control group. In all tests, the control group had better average scores, notably in the paraphrasing test and synonyms test. The control group's average raw score for the Torch comprehension for reading test was almost double the intervention group's average. The average text level scores of both groups: 24.66 for the intervention and 26 for the control were not dramatically different in comparison, due to the fact that the intervention group was not selected based on poor reading accuracy, rather their lower than average comprehension skills.

### Average Scores Pre-test

Test	Intervention	Control
Paraphrasing Test	11.66	17.66
Torch Test Raw Score	3.33	6
Text Level	24.66	26
Synonyms Test	31	39.66

Table 2. Average Scores Pre-test

### Average Scores Post-test

Test	Intervention	Control
Paraphrasing Test	21.33	18.66
Torch Test Raw Score	9	7.33
Text Level	26	26.33
Synonyms Test	56	38.33

Table 3. Average Scores Post-test

The average scores post testing show a marked improvement by the intervention group. In all tests, excluding the text level, the intervention group had better results on average.

It is interesting to note that the control group generally had a higher average score in the pre tests. The control group's average scores remained similar, with some improvement in the Paraphrasing Test, Torch Test and Reading Level, however the average score in the Synonyms Test was slightly lower. The intervention group had made considerable gains in all tests, with a notable improvement in the Synonyms Test with an average score of 56 compared with the average of 38.33 for the control.

The Self Efficacy of each student can be described by examining the scores in Table 4.

Child	Pre	Post
A	6	6
B	4	5
C	6	6
AA	5	5
BB	6	6
CC	6	6

**Table 4** Self Efficacy Scores

Of a possible score of 6, the results indicate that overall, both the intervention and control group display a high self efficacy. Child B, indicated in two responses that he did not use the most effective reading strategy: He answered '*go on reading because it doesn't really matter*' when asked '*When you read a sentence that doesn't make sense do you...*' and in response to this question, '*When you find a story you are reading hard to understand do you...*' and the response given was, '*Not worry about it because you cannot understand every story*'. The students answered further questions to measure their self efficacy for which they were not scored. The intervention group answered 'I know I could' to most questions, for example 'Tell me what the story was about once you have read it'. Not one child indicated that 'I think I can't' or 'I know I can't' to any question. The results indicate that most students in this study feel good about their reading and in general they know they can use strategies to help them when faced with challenges. Child B was the exception and it is of interest that in the Post Testing, his self efficacy improved by a score of 1.

The results from the Paraphrasing Test (figure 1) show the scores of the intervention group – students A, B and C, and the control group – students AA, BB and CC. The

results indicate that every student in the intervention group made an improvement. Student A by 7 points, Student B by 14 points and Student C by 8 points. This is a pleasing trend and reflects the focus of the intervention – using the paraphrasing strategy to comprehend. Although Student C scored lowest of both groups, the gains made were more than students in the control group where Students A and B made gains of two points each and student C regressed one point. Overall, the results show that the intervention had a marked effect on the scores in the post paraphrasing test.

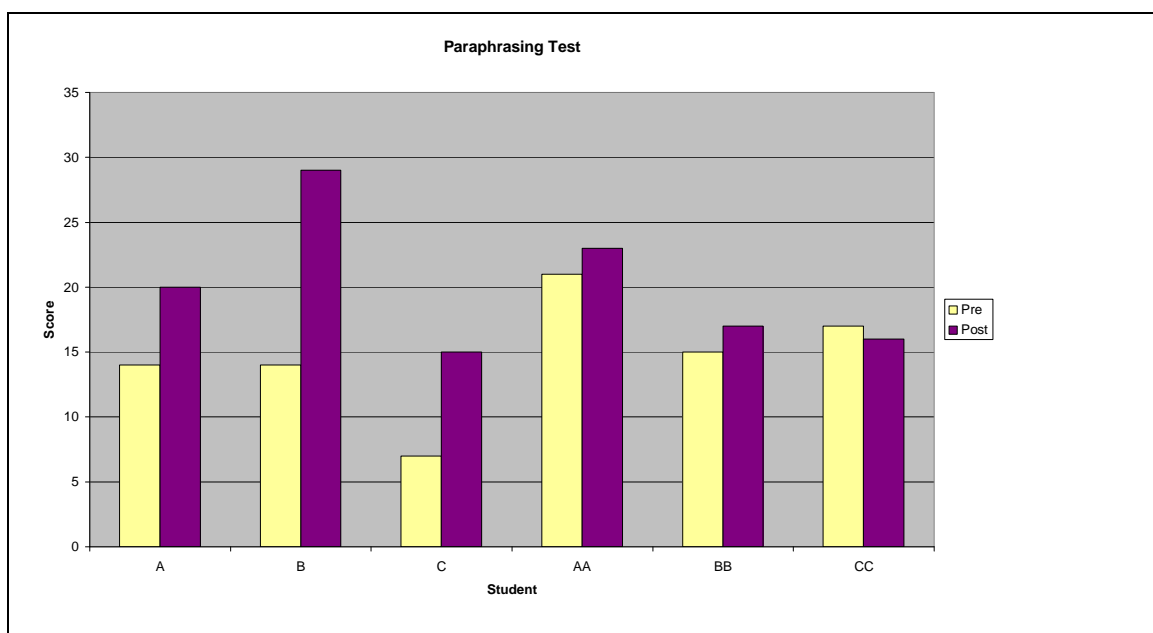


Figure 1 Paraphrasing Test Results

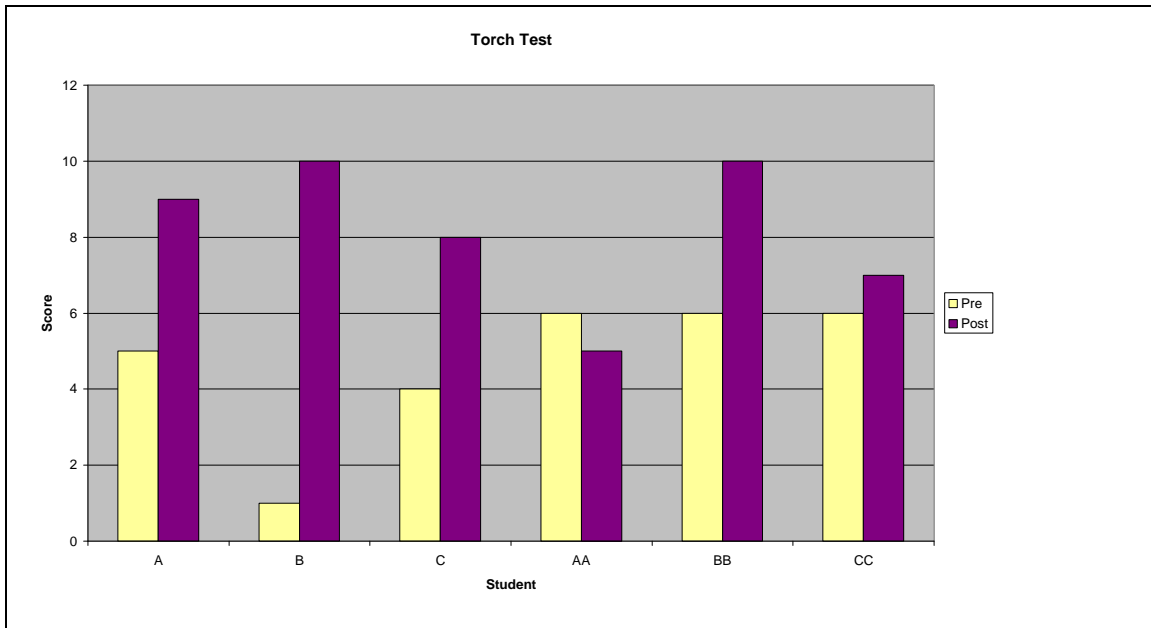


Figure 2 Torch Test Results (Raw Score)

The post-testing results for the Torch reading comprehension test once again show an improvement in scores from the intervention group. Student B made the most gains with an improvement of 9 from 1 in the pre- test to 10 in the post test. Students A and B both improved by 4. Students in the control group made somewhat of an improvement in test results, although student AA did not perform as well as in the pre-test. These results indicate a more sizeable improvement from the intervention group as was found with the Paraphrasing Test. In fact, all students in the intervention group performed as well as, if not better than the control group. These results are pleasing as they show a distinct change in the intervention group’s comprehension of fiction text, which was the target of the study.

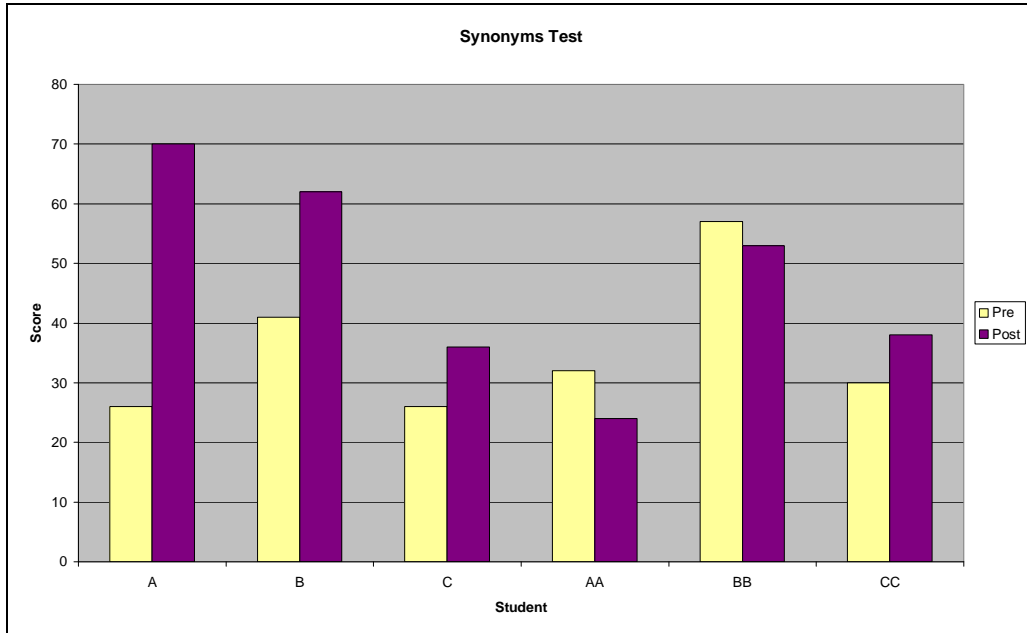


Figure 3 Synonyms Test Results

The results from the Synonyms Test (Figure 3) show an improvement by all in the intervention group. Students A and B improved their scores by a substantial amount. Student C made considerable gains. At the time of post testing with the intervention group, they appeared very confident in undertaking the test. This could be attributed to their work with synonyms in the teaching unit and a greater understanding of what the task required them to do. In contrast, the control group did not demonstrate such an improvement in the post test results. In fact, two of the three performed worse than on the pre test.

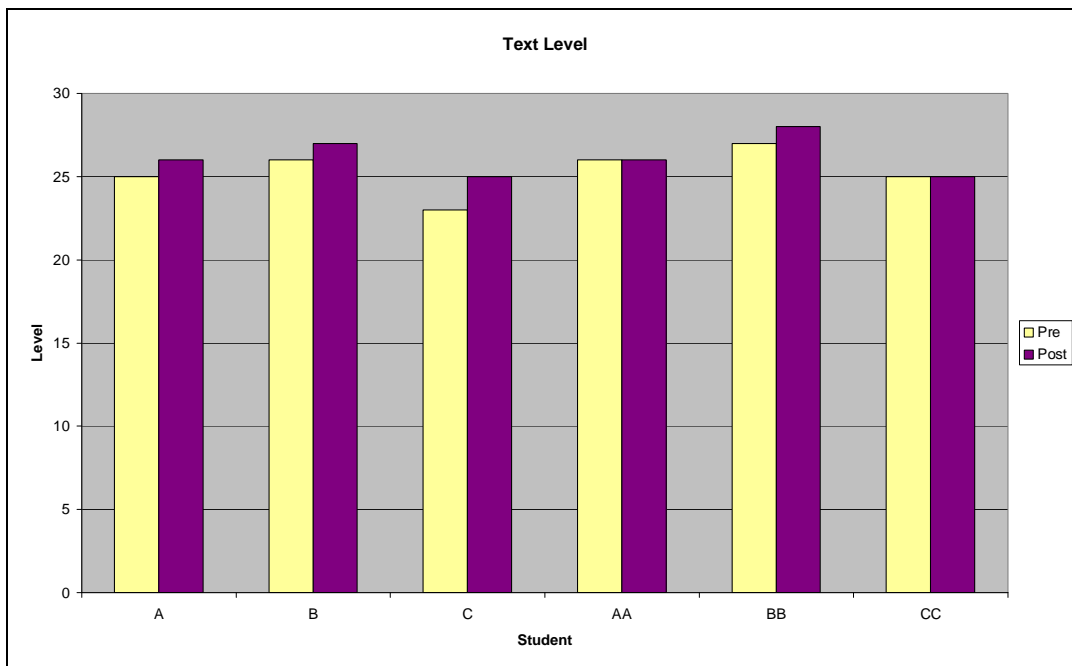


Figure 4 Text Levels

Figure 4 displays the text levels of each student pre and post testing. The average text level pre testing was 25.33 and post 26.17. It can be seen that there is not a huge variation in text reading levels between the intervention group and control group both pre and post testing. Student C moved up two text levels which was the most notable change. Two students in the control group, AA and CC remained stagnant, whilst Students A and B in the intervention group moved up one level. These results are not surprising given that readers in the intervention and control group had already been identified by their teacher as able decoders. It is worth noting that all students improved or maintained their text reading level at the time of post testing.

### Discussion

The results of this study support the hypothesis, which suggests that teaching year two students with English as a second language the strategy of paraphrasing improves their comprehension of fiction texts. Students demonstrated gains in their reading comprehension, as they did in the paraphrasing test results and synonym test. Their self efficacy remained high with an improvement shown post test by one student. It would be



of interest to complete further study over an extended period of time with a larger sample size to form a more robust conclusion, however the results indicate that the paraphrasing strategy has a positive effect on reading comprehension. These findings are in line with the study completed by Katims and Harris (1997) who found that the paraphrasing strategy had been demonstrated to significantly increase the reading comprehension of students with and without learning disabilities. Similarly, the results match the work of Kletzien (2009) who found the paraphrasing strategy effective with students in their study. Fisk & Hurst (2003) found that the use of the strategy was effective in the reading comprehension in students in secondary school. Perhaps teaching the strategy in primary school classrooms would have a positive effect on students' reading comprehension ability as they move on to secondary school and are presented with more challenging reading material.

The results fit with Lee and Von Colin's study (2003) where they found the strategy improved students' paraphrasing and comprehension ability. They suggested further studies were needed with more diverse student populations – the ESL student could be the subject for further studies in comprehension strategies such as paraphrasing or visualisation to measure the effect of such cognitive strategies on the comprehension levels non native English speakers. Further investigation into the use of synonyms in reading comprehension amongst ESL students could be examined as the results of this study showed quite a marked change in students' synonym test results. It raises the question as to the extent to which a wide vocabulary knowledge or cultural experience could effect students' success in reading comprehension. Students within the intervention group performed much better in the post synonym test – this could be attributed to the wider 'word bank' they had developed as a result of participating in the 10 lessons or perhaps a better understanding of what synonyms are and how to access their existing word bank to make suggestions. The confidence in students when presented with this test post teaching was remarkable- they had a very clear understanding of what was required of them and even recalled some of the synonyms we had examined in the texts read during the 10 lessons. Student A and B both made a considerable improvement in their synonym test scores, however student C improved

only slightly. Student C displayed gains in all tests, excluding the self efficacy test where her self efficacy remained high, although students A and B appeared to have performed better in all tests. Student C generally had a lower entry point in all tests in pre-testing and perhaps her gains may have been more significant had she attended all teaching sessions. She did miss two – sessions 9 and 10, and it is likely that she had less time to consolidate use of the strategy and use it independently. Student C could perhaps be a learner who, given more intervention over a longer period of time would make gains to match those of her peers.

Of particular interest were the results of student B in the Torch test and Paraphrasing Test. He made excellent improvements in both tests, with the most marked improvement shown compared to all students in the study. Initially he displayed nervous behaviour during the pre testing phase and there was a notable change in this behaviour when he was presented with the same tests during post testing. This child scored a few points below his peers on the Self Efficacy Test, despite having a good reading ability when comparing text level scores. In completing the Self Efficacy Questionnaire he often hesitated with his answers and appeared unsure about his ability to *remember what happens in a story as you read it or make a picture in your mind as you read*. This child could benefit from metacognitive strategies being modelled such as self talk and self monitoring. Asking him to state what he will do before he reads to get knowledge ready could also assist. Having a goal for reading could help him establish what strategies he will use as he reads, rather than simply launching into a text cold. Consistent reflection at the end of or during lessons to state what has been learnt could benefit him greatly in the classroom. Being able to articulate what a strategy such as paraphrasing is and how it can help us with comprehension can give students a purpose for reading and a way of monitoring and checking their understanding of what they read.

A number of implications for teaching practice can be made from the outcome of this study. First, use of the paraphrasing strategy could benefit all students in their reading comprehension, even with those who do not display difficulties in this area. The strategy could be modelled to students as a whole class or within teacher focus groups. As was

demonstrated in the teaching unit, implementation would begin with the teacher scaffolding quite heavily and gradually reducing support as students become more proficient in using the strategy. Use of the 'RAP' poster as a cue for students proved to be effective. The strategy could be used in the wider curriculum or with non fiction texts, for example to improve comprehension of scientific reports. Use of synonyms could be explicitly taught and built into the literacy program to build up students' word banks. Another implication for teaching practice is the modelling of self talk. Questioning students before they read, as they read or after they read could help them become better monitors of strategies to use to help them understand texts. Sentence starters such as, 'today I will..... as I read' or ' I have been learning how to paraphrase which helps me because...' could be useful. The present study supported use of the strategy with junior primary school students, it could be implied that teaching the strategy in the early years of schooling would be advantageous to students' reading development.

The results found in this study suggest further research could be undertaken with primary school students who are ESL – studies into the effectiveness of reading strategies such as visualisation or predicting and whether these strategies have an effect on comprehension levels. Research into ESL students and comprehension scores as students progress through year levels at school could tell us whether or not comprehension improves as the student becomes more proficient in using the English language. This could be examined with a standardised test such as Torch in students from years 2 to 6 for example. Similar studies could be undertaken with students who are native speakers as to ascertain the effectiveness of reading strategies.

In summary, the results of this study indicate that the use of the paraphrasing strategy with ESL students improves their reading comprehension of fiction texts. An environment where students have the strategy modelled to them effectively and are supported in practicing use of the strategy has proven positive to their learning. Whilst the present study examined gains after teaching ten lessons, implementing the strategy into school literacy programs over a longer duration could prove to be more effective.

## Appendix 1

Teaching Unit – Paraphrasing

John Munro’s Comprehension – Paraphrasing Strategy (2006)

Overall Objective – to use paraphrasing as a strategy to comprehend fiction texts.

### Session 1

Learning outcome – To describe paraphrasing as a strategy that helps to understand what we read.

Text: Crosby Crocodile’s Disguise

*“I am going to teach you something that you can do that will help you to remember what you read. It is called paraphrasing. First we will read a paragraph from a story, then we will look at each sentence more carefully and say it in our own words.*

*We can use this word, ‘RAP’ to help us remember what to do. R – read the text. A – ask yourself questions about the main idea and details. P – put the ideas into your own words in complete sentences.”*

*Today we are going to read a story about a crocodile who does not like the way his body looks.*

#### Teacher models paraphrasing and cues student activity:

*“Look at the first paragraph. I am going to read it aloud then I want you to read it with me. After that, I will look at the first sentence and ask myself ‘what is the main idea, and what are the details?’*

Teacher explains meaning of ‘main idea’ and ‘details’ by drawing examples from the first paragraph.

*Now I am going to say it another way by changing some of the words.*

*Now I’d like you to have a try.*

Teacher guides students through the paraphrasing strategy referring to the RAP poster.

Sentence read	Teacher paraphrases	Students paraphrase
Crosby Crocodile stood before the mirror.	A crocodile called Crosby stood in front of a mirror.	
“Just look at me,” he sighed.	“Have a peek at me,” he groaned.	
“My mouth is too big.”	“These jaws are enormous.”	

#### Teacher reviews the action:

*Let us look at what we did here. We read a sentence and then said it in another way. See how it helped you to understand what the text said? Which sentences do you think are the most effective – that is, which sentences have we changed but kept the main idea the same?*

*Do you have any questions?*

**Students practise:**

*Let's try this again with the next sentence. We will check if we understand the meaning of all of the words in the sentence too.*

Teacher and students read the next sentence and practise paraphrasing aloud using the RAP strategy. Record attempts on the whiteboard.

**Teacher reviews the action:**

*Let us look at what we did. We read the sentence, and then we asked ourselves questions about the main idea. Next we put it into our own words and we changed as many words as we could. This helps us to understand what we read.*

*Let's write down some of the words we changed – these are called synonyms and they can help us when using this strategy.* Teacher records words on flashcards for future reference.

*Can you tell me what you have learnt today? How could this help you in your reading?*

Teacher reinforces what students have learnt and gives positive feedback for their attempts.

**Session 2**

Learning Outcome – to use synonyms to paraphrase text at a sentence level.

Text: Crosby Crocodile's Disguise

Within this session, the teacher reviews what was taught in Session one. Students are encouraged to articulate what they learnt about paraphrasing.

The teacher models paraphrasing a sentence read in session one, then asks students to repeat the task.

The teacher then directs students to focus on the next paragraph in the text and follows the following teaching sequence:

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Students</b>
Read aloud the next paragraph in the text.	Read aloud the paragraph in the text (by reading same paragraph as the teacher).
Guide students through RAP strategy to paraphrase each sentence in the paragraph. Record students' paraphrased sentences on the whiteboard.	Students work together to paraphrase sentence by sentence as a group.
Direct students to write their paraphrase in pairs. (One student pair, one student with	Discuss ideas with a partner, using the RAP poster as a guide. Record paraphrase of

teacher).	each sentence read.
Ask students to share their paraphrased sentences. Correct responses.	Read paraphrased sentences aloud and discuss which synonyms were used.
Record synonyms used on flashcards. Ask students to group synonyms together from Session 1&2 to reinforce understanding.	Students turn over flashcards, read each word and group synonyms together. E.g. big/large/huge cover/conceal/disguise cupboard/wardrobe/closet

### **Sessions 3 - 8**

Texts: A Bull in a China Shop (Session 3 & 4), The Ghost and the Sausage (Session 5 & 6), Misha Disappears (Session 7 & 8).

Learning Outcome - students paraphrase at a paragraph level with support.

These sessions followed the format below:

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Students</b>
Guide students to read/retell a passage from previous session. Revise the use of the RAP strategy.	Read selected passage from previous session. Orally retell passage in own words using the RAP strategy.
Introduce new text. Guide students to read the paragraph twice.	Students read new text together. (Session 3 & 4) Students read new text silently. (Session 5 – 8)
Ask students to highlight or write key words on sticky notes then suggest possible synonyms for each.	Highlight key words or write each key word on a sticky note. Share responses with the group. Suggest then write down synonyms.
Ask students how they will go about paraphrasing the paragraph to help them understand what it is about.	Students respond by describing the strategy. E.g. <i>'first I will read the text, next I will ask myself questions about the main idea and details. Finally I will try to change as many words as I can and say it another way.'</i>
Direct students to write a paraphrase of their paragraph as a group or in pairs. Provide support where needed.	Paraphrase the paragraph by working through each step in the strategy.

Ask students to describe how the strategy helped them to understand the text.	Reflect on learning – <i>‘today I have been practicing...’ ‘this helps me to... because...’ ‘Next time I read I can...’</i>
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## Sessions 9 & 10

Text: Monster for Hire

Learning Outcome – to paraphrase at a paragraph level individually.

Teacher	Students
Guide students to read/retell a passage from previous session. Briefly revise the use of the RAP strategy.	Read selected passage from previous session. Orally retell passage in own words using the RAP strategy.
Introduce new text. Guide students to read the paragraph twice individually.	Students read new text silently.
Ask students to individually work through the strategy to paraphrase the paragraph.	Independently work through each step in the RAP strategy, then write own paraphrase of the paragraph.
Ask students to describe how the strategy helped them to understand the text.	Reflect on learning – <i>‘today I have been practicing...’ ‘this helps me to... because...’ ‘I could use this in my future learning by...’</i>
* Session 10	Students individually write down the steps they can take when paraphrasing text.

## Texts

Lesson	Text	Genre	Fry’s Readability Level
1 & 2	Crosby Crocodile’s Disguise	Fiction	Year 2

3 & 4	A Bull in a China Shop	Fiction	Year 2
5 & 6	The Ghost and the Sausage	Fiction	Year 2
7 & 8	Misha Disappears	Fiction	Year 2
9 & 10	Monster for Hire	Fiction	Year 2



**R** – Read the text

**A** – Ask yourself questions about the main idea and details.

**P** – Put the text into your own words by changing as many words as you can.

### Appendix 3

**Data Table Demographic**

Name	Control = 0 Teaching=1	Age in MONTHS	Gender 0=Male 1=Female	Years of Schooling	ESL No=0 Yes=1	Earlier Intevention No=0 RR=1 Bridges=2 ERIK=3...	EMA No=0 Yes=1
A	1	96	1	3	1	0	0
B	1	101	0	3	1	0	0
C	1	98	1	3	1	0	0
AA	0	97	0	3	1	1	0
BB	0	91	1	3	1	1	0
CC	0	96	1	3	1	1	0

**Data Table Pre and Post test scores**

Student	Attendan ce No. of sessions	Para PRE	Para POST	TORCH raw PRE	TORC H raw POST	TORCH Score PRE	TORC H score POST	Text level PRE	Text level POST	Synonym s PRE	Synony ms POST	Self Efficacy PRE	Self Efficac y POST
A	10	14	20	5	9	22	30	25	26	26	70	6	6
B	10	14	29	1	10	7	32	26	27	41	62	4	5
C	8	7	15	4	8	20	28	23	25	26	36	6	6
AA	0	21	23	6	5	24	22	26	26	32	24	5	6
BB	0	15	17	6	10	24	32	27	28	57	53	6	6
CC	0	17	16	6	7	24	26	25	25	30	38	6	6

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## Resources

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