

Hypothesis

Explicit teaching of word meanings and synonyms to year three students will improve their literal reading comprehension.

Abstract

Year three students with poor literal comprehension were explicitly taught word meanings and synonyms with the intent of improving their literal comprehension. An OXO design was employed and data was gathered through individual testing and observations of students during a ten session teaching sequence. The study group comprised of five, year three ESL boys with a known history of reading difficulties. Three of the boys received the intervention whilst the remaining two were to act as the control. All five boys participated in the pre and post testing. All boys performed below average standards at the pre-test level in the comprehension task as well as the synonyms task. More significantly, all five students performed extremely poorly in the Record of Oral Language for older children. This would strongly suggest the need for an intense oral language program for this particular group. Findings were generally positive and post- test results provided evidence that students who received the intervention out performed the control group, particularly in the synonyms task. These findings would suggest that a focus on learning activities that target vocabulary building and word meanings in the reading context would, eventually improve their ability to comprehend a text at the literal level.

Introduction

Recent trends in literacy teaching and learning have placed a heavy emphasis on the 'decoding' of text at increasing levels of complexity, leaving many middle to late primary school students with little or poor comprehension skills. The Early years Literacy Research project (CLaSS), directed by Hill and Crevola has been adopted by many Parish schools and relies on children moving through text levels at a rapid rate. Many educators would argue that this emphasis has contributed to the decline in children's overall reading comprehension and individual schools AIM data would

appear to support this argument. Whilst able to decode at an age appropriate level, comprehension ability is considerably lower.

Historically, Literacy has been defined ‘ as sets of perceptual and cognitive skills for encoding (writing) and decoding (reading) alphabetic print texts.’(Healy, A. in Green and Campbell (eds), 2003, p.155) Recent approaches to literacy education have relied heavily on a skills based approach, focusing on developing students code breaking skills. Luke and Freebody argue that a proficient reader requires a ‘broad and flexible repertoire of practices’ (Freebody and Luke, 2003, p.56, as cited in Literacy teaching and learning study guide, 2003) in order to become a successful reader and require explicit instruction ‘to play four related roles: code-breaker, text-participant, text user and text analyst.’ (Luke and Freebody, 1992 as cited in Deakin University study guide, 2003) They go on to say that other equally important ‘roles’ in reading have been largely ignored and this has contributed to the reading failure of many students.

Comprehension is the ‘power of the mind to understand’ (Parkin, Parkin & Pool, 2002, p.5). Many would argue that reading and comprehension are synonymous in that no reading can be said to have taken place unless the written text has been understood. Dolores Durkin of the University of Illinois’ Centre for the Study of Reading in 1979 commented ‘Even though the observed teachers rarely taught children how to comprehend, they spent considerable time assessing the children’s ability to do just that’. (Parkin, Parkin& Pool, 2002, p.4). In fact it was found that less than 1% of actual teaching time was spent in teaching students how to comprehend. British researchers who found that teachers were overwhelmed by the task of teaching reading comprehension made similar conclusions.

One of the most persistent findings in reading research is that the extent of students’ vocabulary knowledge relates strongly to their reading comprehension and overall academic success. (Lehr, Fran; Osborn, Jean, Heibert, Elfrieda, H, 2004). Many educators believe that there is a close relationship between vocabulary and comprehension and therefore, one of the most important reasons for providing students with explicit instruction to ‘build’ vocabulary. Persistent reference is made to the ‘Matthews effect’ (Stanovich, 1986) implying that good readers read more,

become better readers and learn more words where as poor readers read less, fall further behind, and learn fewer words (Lehr, Fran; Osborn, Jean, Hiebert, Elfrieda, H, 2004). Of all reasons for explicit instruction in vocabulary, this would be the most compelling.

A well-developed meaning vocabulary is a prerequisite for fluent reading and is a critical link between decoding and comprehension (R. Malatesha Joshi, 2005). Unfortunately, the role of vocabulary in proficient reading has received little attention in both research and theory. Gough and Tunmer (1986, as cited in Smith, 2002) emphasised the importance of vocabulary in comprehension but at the same time considered it largely ignored. They suggest to prevent reading failure in students, vocabulary instruction should be an integral component of reading instruction.

Munro (2006) acknowledges that word meanings are the building blocks of oral language. He goes on to say that some children have difficulty learning word meanings and require explicit and repetitive instruction to improve their vocabulary. At the same time, we should be teaching students how to develop their 'meaning making motors' (Munro, 2006) by instruction in metacognitive strategies and by providing students with activities that will improve their 'word meaning making' ability. The explicit teaching of synonyms would be an integral part of this instruction and would serve to enhance vocabulary development even further.

Research acknowledges that vocabulary is often taught by asking students to look for dictionary definitions (R. Malatesha Joshi, 2005). However, effective instruction requires much more than this. Meaning-based approaches, where words are studied within context are far more likely to result in a better understanding than rote, boring dictionary- based instruction. Lerh, Osborn; Jean, Heibert and Elfrieda (2004) note that connecting key words to familiar synonyms before students read can be an effective way of helping students maximise their understanding of a text.

A good reader is able to extract meaning from a text. They are able to connect what they have read to prior knowledge and they are able to expand on what they have just

read. They are able to use their understanding of words to comprehend a text and they are able to use their knowledge to make meaning of unknown words from the context of the text. However, these strategies are not 'automatic' for all students and many children need systematic and explicit teaching of comprehension strategies in order to become proficient and successful readers. This study aims to explicitly teach a group of children, who have poor comprehension skills to use word meanings and synonyms whilst reading a text, which in turn will improve their comprehension.

This present study seeks to investigate whether a group of year three Vietnamese boys, with a known history of reading difficulties, more specifically poor reading comprehension, will have improved reading outcomes following systematic and explicit instruction in developing word meanings and synonyms within context. It is hoped that the students in this study will be able to transfer the knowledge gained following the instruction to new and unfamiliar texts.

Method

Design: This study uses a case study OXO design where the gain in reading comprehension, following explicit teaching of word meanings and synonyms will be monitored for a group of year 3 ESL students with a history of poor reading comprehension. Ongoing assessment of learning will be documented during and after each of the ten sessions.

Participants:

Five students, all male, were chosen for this study. All students are from the same year three classroom. The three weakest students were to receive the teaching intervention and the other two to act as the control group. The purpose of the control group was to gauge by comparison whether the intervention led to positive changes in learning behaviour.

All five students experience ongoing difficulties in reading and literacy development. All five students have a Vietnamese background where English is their second language. They all have limited oral language and two out of the five are reading

recovery graduates. Whilst able to decode at an age appropriate level this is not commensurate with their comprehension ability.

All five students scored considerably below average standards in a Reading Progress Test. This comprehension test measures student understanding at word, sentence, paragraph and short text level. It also measures their ability to comprehend texts at a literal and inferential level. This group experienced difficulties at all levels.

A Record of Oral Language (Munro, 2005) was given to each student to assess their ability to listen and repeat sentences containing 1, 2, 3 and 4 ideas. All students, with the exception of Control A did extremely poorly and were unable to recall any sentence containing more than 1 idea. They were unable to stay on task, became restless and confused and I was forced to stop testing and give each student a significant break before continuing on with the test. Each student, including Control A (who achieved the highest score) complained that the task was far too difficult. These results are indicative of a very significant gap and weakness in oral language that would have a huge impact on their ability to read and comprehend a text. This particular group of children would benefit from an intense oral language program that targets both listening and speaking skills.

TABLE 1: ENTRY LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS

Participants	Student A	Student B	Student C	Control A	Control B
Age	8yrs4mths	8years	8yrs7mths	8yrs6mths	8yrs6mths
*RPT	19/38, * 37%	21/38 *46%	21/38 *46%	20/38 *41%	20/38 *41%
**Record of oral lang.	3/30	3/30	4/30	11/30	4/30
ESL	Vietnamese	Vietnamese	Vietnamese	Vietnamese	Vietnamese
Reading Recovery	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Sensory Impairment	Wears glasses	No	No	No	No

*** Reading Progress Test- Scores and Percentile Ranking**

**** Record of Oral Language (Munro, J. 2005)**

Materials:

Materials included for this study:

- **Reading Progress Test.** The Reading progress test is a comprehension test, which measures children's literal and inferential comprehension at a number of levels including word, sentence and topic. Although an English test, it has Australian norms and gives standardised scores as well as stanines.
- **Record of Oral Language** for older children. (John Munro, 2005)
- **Synonyms Test.** (John Munro, 2005)
- **Comprehension Analysis.** (John Munro's spontaneous and cued retell form)
- **Reading texts:** 'Beating the drought' (Skyrider), 'Greedy cat and the birthday cake' (Skyrider)
- **Flashcards-** containing daily target words (Synonyms)
- **Newspapers and magazines**
- **Tape recorder & tape**
- **Teacher diary**
- **White board & markers**
- **Computers**

Procedure

All five students were individually administered the pre and post- tests. These included:

- Reading progress test
- Synonyms test (John Munro, 2005)
- Record of oral language for older children (John Munro 2005)
- Spontaneous and cued retelling of a text (following John Munro's framework)

These tests assessed the children's literal comprehension levels prior to the teaching intervention, enabling a benchmark to compare after the teaching intervention at the post- test level. The students were then divided into two distinct groups. Two of the students were to act as the control group and would not receive the intervention whilst the remaining three were to receive the intervention. These students were removed from the class group during the morning literacy block for between 30-40 minutes, for ten teaching sessions.

Each session incorporated a number of teacher- facilitated tasks. These tasks included short text readings, target word reading and writing activities, identifying word meanings and synonyms, modelling, student demonstration and student feedback to conclude each of the sessions.

Teaching sequence (see appendix 5 for details)

The format consisted of:

1. Explicit instruction- identifying the purpose of the session to the students
2. Clarifying terms and revision of previous days session.
3. Text reading- Teacher and students to read text containing sessions target words
4. Building synonyms list and looking at word meanings
5. Manipulating and experimenting with synonyms using a different focus for each of the sessions
6. Reflecting on student learning
7. Explicit praise.

A detailed account of the teaching sequence can be found in appendix 5.

Tasks given at the pre-test and the post-test.

Reading Progress Test 2 was administered to all year three students to assess overall reading comprehension. The information gained from this test was especially useful in that it tested children's comprehension at a number of levels. This test examined the children's knowledge at the word, sentence, short text, literal and inferential levels. It allowed the teacher to pinpoint exactly where children were experiencing difficulties, enabling them to target future teaching and learning. Reading Progress Test 2 gives raw scores, stanines, percentile rankings as well as standardised scores- all of which are extremely useful when analysing data. This test allowed me to then choose the students experiencing the most difficulties in reading comprehension and it was interesting to note my Vietnamese boys were at greatest risk. The five lowest students were then chosen to participate in this study.

A spontaneous and cued retell (Munro, 2005) was then administered to all 5 participants. An age appropriate text (A Fry's readability test was done on a level

21 text and placed it as an early year three text) was given to the student to read aloud to the teacher. The student was then asked to recall what the story was about. Following this, the student was cued by a number of questions, to expand further on his understanding of the text. Marks were then given for all main ideas recalled in both the spontaneous and cued retell. The information provides us with an overall picture of what the student is able to tell us both with and without assistance. It gives us an understanding of how students integrate and consolidate ideas read as well as additional knowledge they have gained when prompted or cued by the teacher.

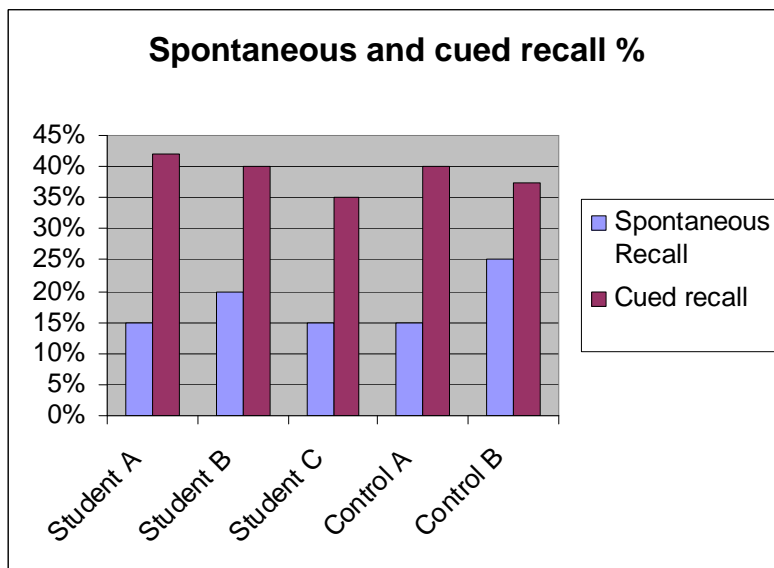
The Synonyms task (Munro, 2005) was administered to the students individually to assess their overall understanding of synonyms and whether or not they were able to recall synonyms for the words administered by the teacher. The children were given as much time as needed to recall a synonym for the target words provided. If they could not recall a synonym, and became agitated we would move on and come back to the target word at a later stage in the test. **See Appendix 1 for test details.**

Sentence memory for sentence task (Munro, 2005) was administered to the intervention and control groups for the purpose of gaining an understanding of their listening comprehension. Sentences containing 1,2,3 and 4 ideas were read aloud to the students. They then had to repeat the sentence back exactly as they heard it. Sentences were repeated a number of times at the child's request and if confused or experiencing difficulties. **See Appendix 2 for test details.**

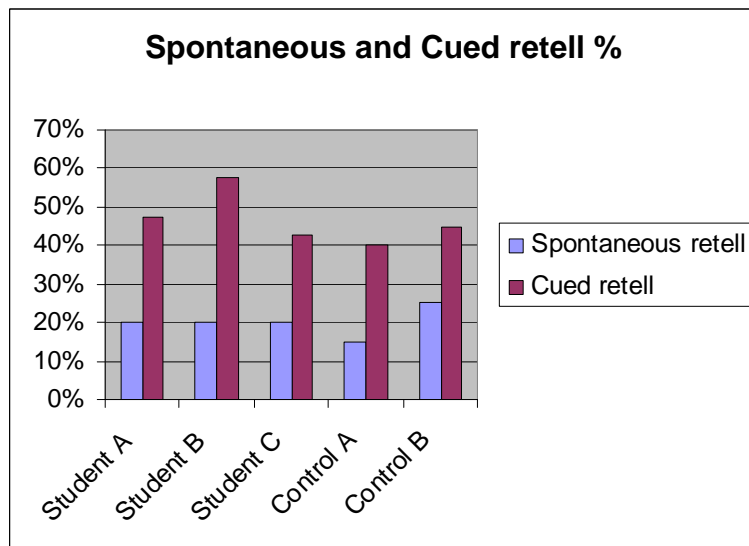
Group Results

Test	Pre Teaching					Post teaching				
	Experimental			Control		Experimental			Control	
Student	A	B	C	A	B	A	B	C	A	B
Spontaneous and cued retell	15%	20%	15 %	15%	25%	20%	20%	20%	15%	25%
	42.5%	37.50%	37.5%	40%	30%	47.5%	57.5%	42.5%	40%	45%
	57.5%	57.5 %	52.5%	55%	55%	67.5%	77.5%	62.5%	55%	70%
Synonyms task										
	8/29	11/29	9/29	11/29	10/29	14/29	17/29	17/29	12/29	11/29

Pre- Intervention results for Spontaneous and cued retell



Post Intervention results for spontaneous and cued retell.



The above tables show students results at the pre and post-tests for the spontaneous and cued retell. All students with the exception of Control A made small gains.

Student A was able to recall 15% of the main ideas in the story spontaneously prior to intervention and was able to recall 20% of the main ideas spontaneously after the intervention in the post- test. **Student A** was able to recall a further 42.5% of the main ideas under cued comprehension in the pre test compared with 47.5% in the post test after the teaching intervention.

Student B was able to recall 20% of the main ideas spontaneously prior to the intervention and was unable to improve this score at the post intervention test. His results remained the same. However, **Student B** recalled 37.5% of the main ideas under cued comprehension at the pre-test level compared with 57.5% after the intervention.

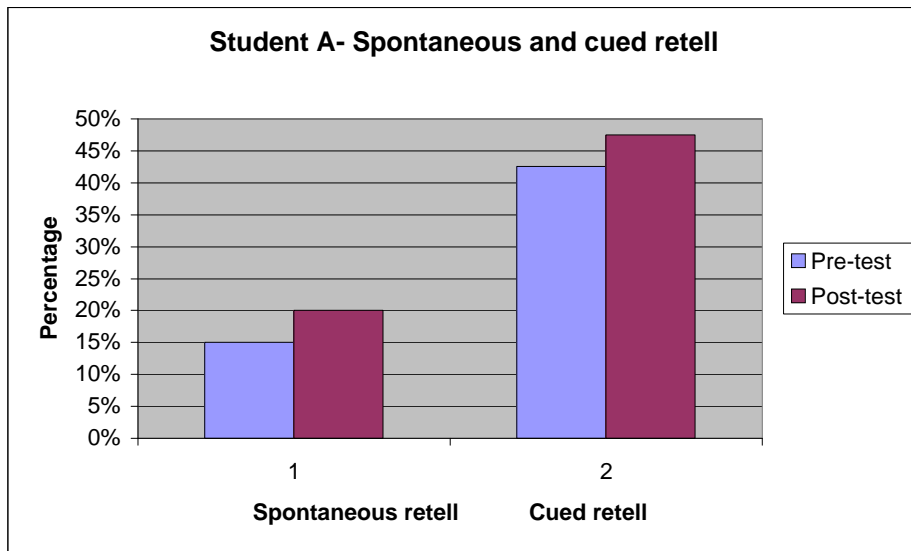
Student C recalled 15% of the main ideas spontaneously at the pre-test, compared to 20% at the post intervention level. He was able to recall 37.5% of the main ideas under cued comprehension at the pre-test level and 42.5% at the post- test level.

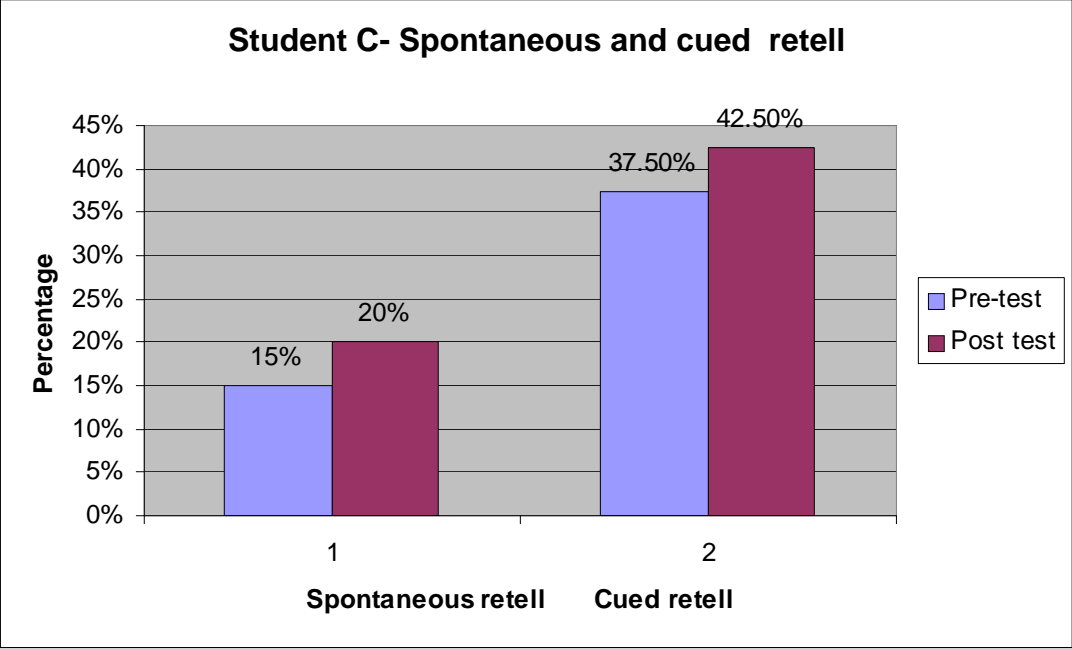
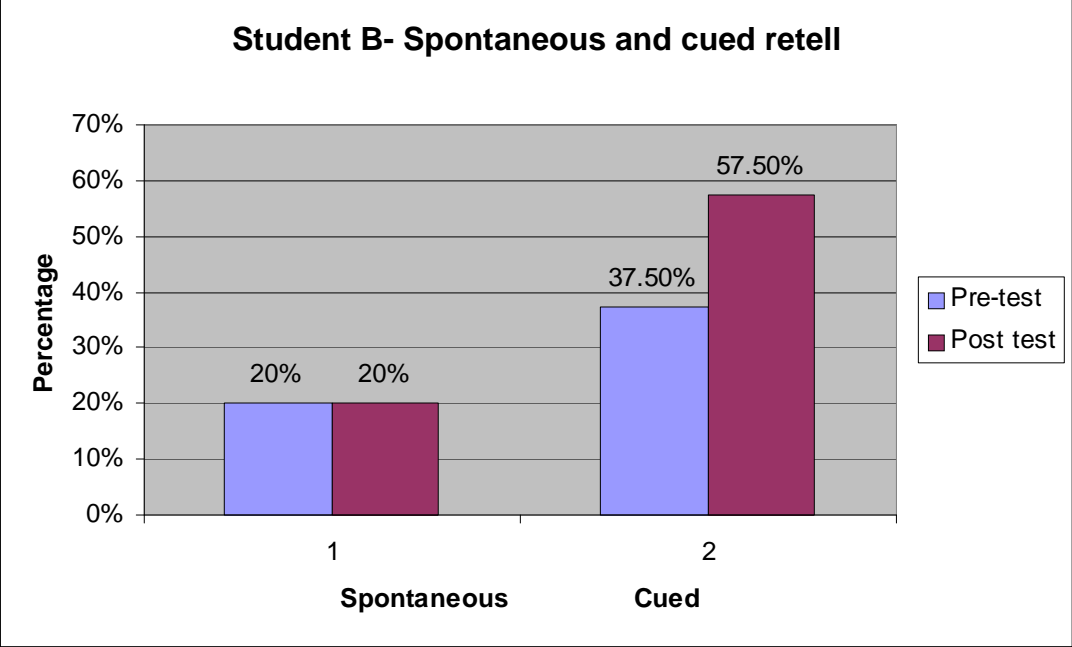
Control A recalled 15% of the main ideas of the story spontaneously at the pre-test level and his results remained the same at the post-test. He was able to recall a further 40% of the main ideas under cued comprehension at the pre-test and this result remained the same at the post-test. He was the only student who did not improve.

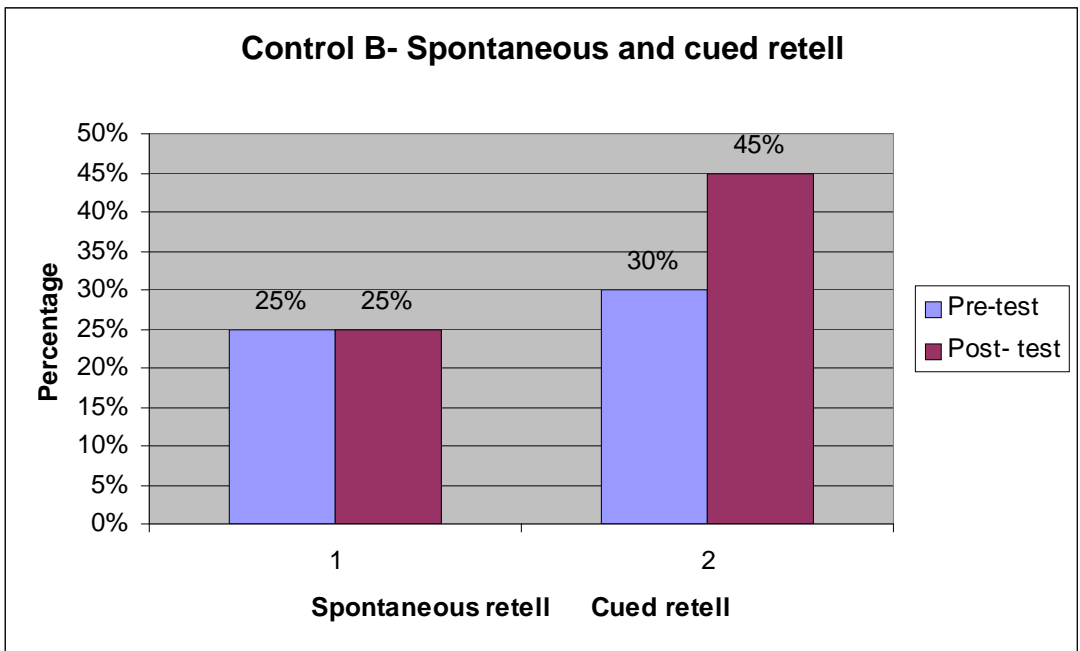
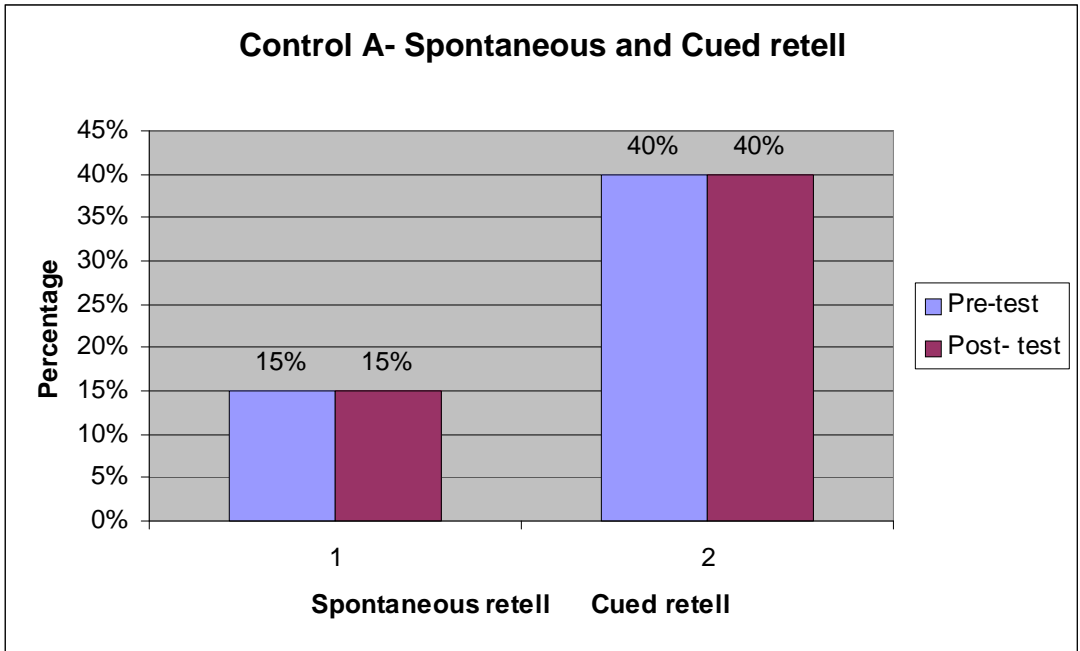
Control B was able to recall 25% of the main ideas of the story spontaneously at the pre-test and this result remained the same at the post-test level. However, **Control B** was able to recall a further 30% of the main ideas under cued comprehension at the pre-test level compared with 45% at the post-test level.

Although four of the five students showed small gains at the post-test level, I am suspicious that some of this improvement this can be attributed to the fact that they were familiar with the text. When comparing the transcripts of student's responses at the pre and post- test level, it is apparent that, whilst able to recall a higher percentage of main ideas in the text after the teaching intervention, each of the four students found it difficult to transfer the knowledge they had gained from the teaching sessions to the post-test retell. It could be stated from the student's individual responses that the gains in percentage were incidental and in spite of the intervention. Ten lessons of intervention was a mere 'drop in the ocean' for this ESL group and although these students were enthusiastic and prepared to participate, this intervention would need to be a long term project to ascertain a true and accurate 'picture' to determine what had changed and improved learning behaviours.

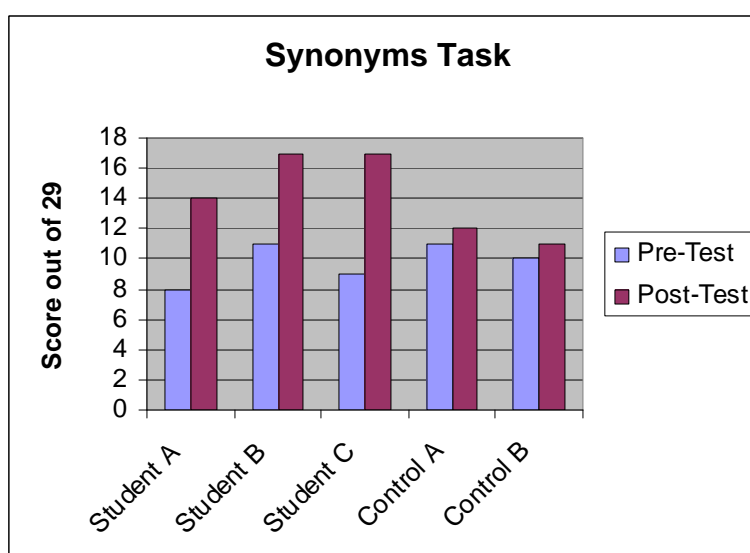
Detailed transcripts of student's responses can be found in Appendices 3 & 4. Student's individual results at the pre and post-test levels are charted below.







Pre and post intervention results for synonym task.



The above table shows the groups results of the synonyms task at the pre and post-tests. Whilst the intervention group made significant gains at the post-test level, Control A and B showed minimal improvement.

Student A scored 8 out of a possible 29 on the synonyms task at the pre-test level compared with 14 out of 29 at the post- test. He was able to recall a further 6 synonyms after the teaching intervention.

Student B scored 11 out of a possible 29 on the synonyms task at the pre-test level compared to 17 out of 29 at the post-test. He was also able to recall a further 6 synonyms at the post-test after intervention.

Student C was able to recall 9 out of a possible 29 on the synonyms task the pre-test level, compared to 17 out of 29 at the post-test. He was able to recall a further 8 synonyms at the pre-test. **Student C** made the largest gains of the group.

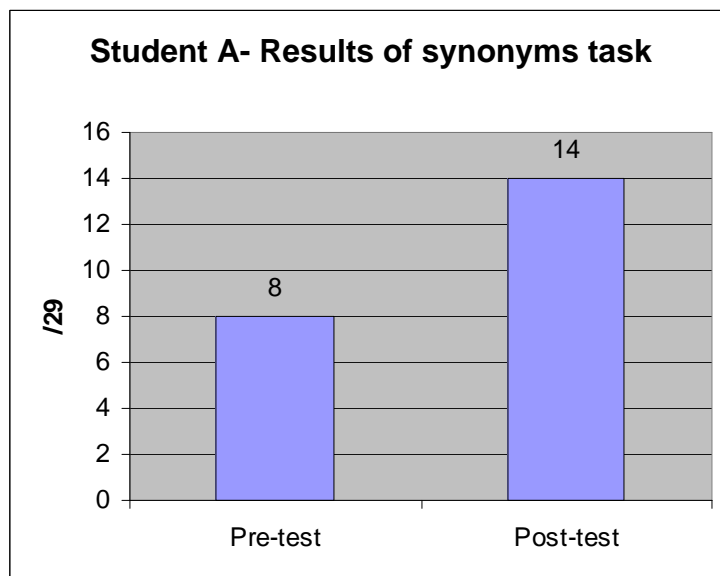
Control A scored 11 out of 29 on the synonyms task at the pre-test and 12 out of 29 at the post-test. He was only able to improve his score by 1 mark.

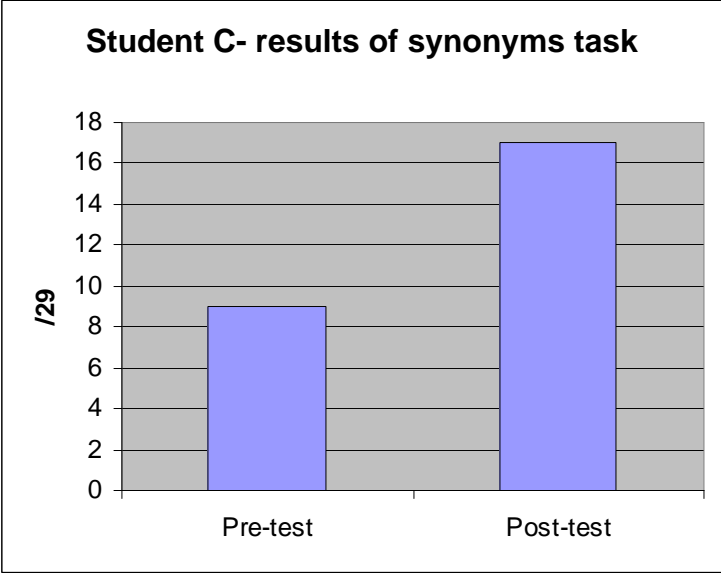
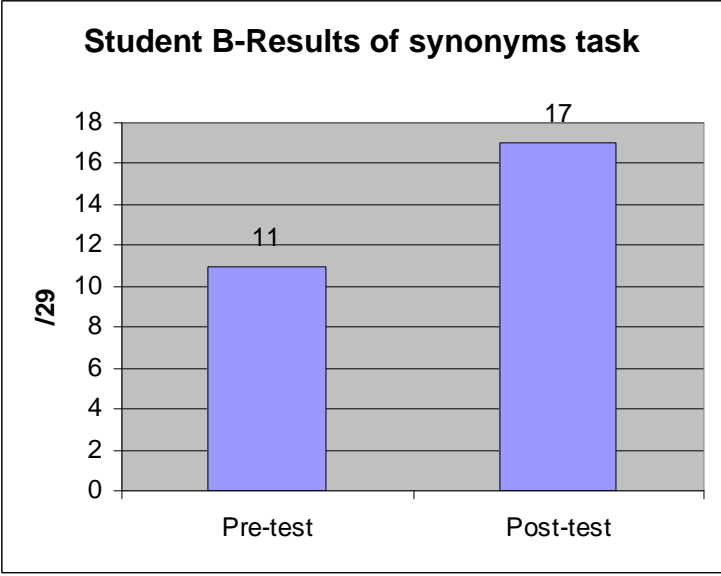
Similarly, **Control B** scored 10 out of 29 on the synonyms task at the pre-test, compared to 11 out of 29 at the post-test. He too, was only able to improve his score by 1 mark.

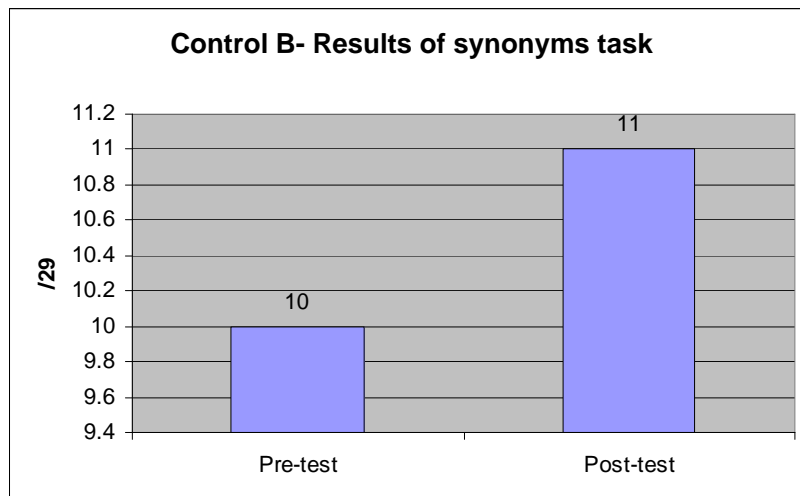
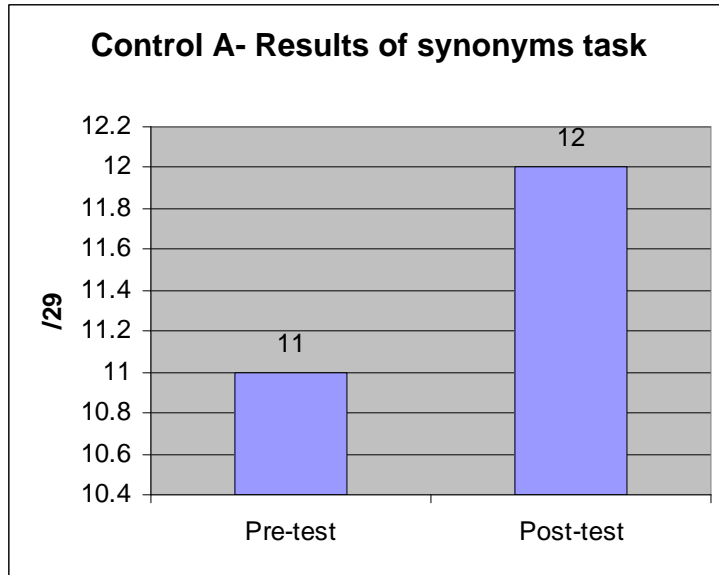
These results imply an improved understanding of synonyms after the teaching intervention that could be attributed to an improved understanding of word meanings and synonyms, gained by participating in the ten- lesson sequence. All students who

received the intervention made significant gains in synonym knowledge at the post-test level. All students, including Control A and Control B, struggled to give synonyms for more than half of the 29 words read to them at the pre-test level. They became agitated and fidgety even when I repeatedly told them to take their time and re-assure them that we could pass a word and revisit it when able. All students found it difficult to give synonyms for a noun, for example, cage or shoe, and their first response was often a word that you would associate with that particular word, for example, for the word fast, I was given furious. Instructions had to be repeated several times at the pre-test for each of the students, particularly Student C, as they insisted on giving me antonyms rather than synonyms. Despite significant gains (by the students who received the intervention) at the post- test level only 2 out of the 3 students managed to actually pass the test. **Student A** only managed to recall 14 out of a possible 29 synonyms, compared with **Student B** who was able to recall 17 out of 29, as was **Student C**. As stated previously, this study would need to be an ongoing project if we were to gain a true ‘picture’ what had actually changed and improved learning behaviours.

Student’s individual results at the pre and post-test are charted below.







Discussion

The aim of this study was an attempt at determining whether teaching synonyms and word meanings to a group of year three ESL boys with ongoing reading difficulties would improve their literal comprehension of a text. Benefits were assessed by comparing student’s individual performances at the pre and post-test levels, as well as make ongoing comparisons with the control students who did not receive the teaching intervention. Findings were positive as all students improved, with the exception of Control A. Although gains in the spontaneous retell were small, overall trends showed

that the intervention group out performed the control group in all areas, more particularly in the synonyms task where the intervention group strongly out performed the control group. Students A, B and C appeared to support the hypothesis. Control A had no change in learning behaviour whereas Control B made minimal gains under the cued retell at the post-test level.

The author is a part-time classroom teacher who job shares this particular class of year three- four students. The five students chosen for the study were very keen to participate and this resulted in a very positive rapport amongst the group. However, the control group were only with -drawn twice for the pre and post testing and were clearly disappointed at not being included for the ten sessions of intervention.

Stevens, Slavin & Farnish (1991) acknowledge that research on best practice indicates that direct instruction by teachers, targeting specific skills and delivering teaching to small groups improves students self esteem. Whilst the intervention group became very confident with both the teacher as well as their peers, the control group were not part of this close knit group and felt excluded. It could be said that the minimal gains made by the control group could be attributed to the lack of involvement with the teacher as well as the intervention group, and gains by the intervention group could be as a direct result of the intervention.

As stated previously, improvement in the performance of four out of the five students in the post-test retell could be attributed to the student's familiarity with the text.

When comparing the transcripts of student's responses at the pre and post- test level, it is apparent that, whilst able to recall a higher percentage of main ideas in the text after the teaching intervention, each of the four students appeared to find it difficult to transfer the knowledge they had gained from the teaching sessions to the post-test retell. I question whether the improved performance of these students was in spite of the intervention or as a result of the intervention.

Oral language development significantly impacted on all participants in this study. All five students experienced great difficulty in expressing and articulating ideas clearly and often showed their frustration when trying to convey meaning. They simply did not have the vocabulary to do so. They stumbled over words, waved their hands about

and repeatedly expressed themselves by saying 'you know...'. This particular group of students need an intense oral language program which focuses heavily on vocabulary building. Munro (2005) acknowledges that word meanings are the building blocks of oral language. He also suggests that oral language development has implications for a student's ability to comprehend a text. This would strongly support my follow up suggestions for this particular group of students.

Hart and Risley (1995) acknowledge that children whose working class parents interact with them as much as parents from advantaged backgrounds have vocabulary levels as high as those children from advantaged families. They go on to say that children mainly use words their parents use with them in conversation and acquire larger vocabularies when their parents use more words. If this is the case, then this particular group of second-generation Vietnamese boys are at a distinct disadvantage. Firstly, Vietnamese is the first language spoken at home. These boys' parents have very little English and generally communicate with their children in Vietnamese. The only modelling of English these boys receive is what they are exposed to on the playground and in the classroom. Secondly and most importantly, they do not have the oral language foundation to build upon.

Confounding variables may have impacted on the results of this study. Teaching sessions were not always taken in the same room or at the same time each day. The researcher was the group's part time teacher and had to rely on her co-worker as well as specialist teachers to 'fit' sessions around. At times, three or four days passed (including weekends) before the following session could be taken. On a few occasions, sessions had to be taken in the afternoon, which is never the optimum for an intense teaching session. Student A was extremely restless and often had to be coaxed back to stay on task. Although undiagnosed with ADHD he certainly has several hyperactive tendencies and was constantly disrupting the group by calling out answers and rolling on the floor.

It is worthy of note the incidental learning that took place during the teaching sessions. When asking children to replace target words with synonyms they were required to re-read sentences to see whether the synonyms made sense within the

context of the sentence, paragraph and story. As a result of the repetitive nature of the daily tasks in which they participated, they become quite good at paraphrasing. Whilst this was not a focus in this particular study, I am quite sure it had some impact on the students learning out-comes, more particularly, their improved performance in the synonyms task at the post-test level.

This study would suggest that even the smallest amount of intervention can be beneficial to students learning out-comes. As stated previously, this ten session sequence is a mere 'drop in the ocean' for this group of ESL boys. Although findings were generally positive and supported the hypothesis, ongoing explicit instruction, preferably at the small group level, would need to be monitored over an extensive period of time to gain an accurate picture of exactly what caused improved student learning outcomes.

Heavy emphasis on 'decoding' and 'code cracking' skills in the early years of literacy appear to have disadvantaged some of our less able students, particularly in the area of comprehension. It was obvious from the teaching sequence as well as pre and post-testing, that these students have 'slipped through the cracks' and missed out on vital instruction in the area of oral language and vocabulary instruction. Hempenstall (2005, p.55) suggests:

"If children are not provided early and consistent experiences that are explicitly designed to foster vocabulary development, background knowledge, the ability to detect and comprehend relationships among verbal concepts, and the ability to actively employ strategies to ensure understanding and retention of materials, reading failure will occur no matter how robust word recognition skills are."

I would suggest a number of factors have played a role in the reading failure of these boys and I believe, after completing this study that any intervention in the area of reading and writing would be beneficial, no matter how small. Given the success of this research project, and that 70% of the students from this particular school are from ESL backgrounds, a whole school approach to the development of oral language which builds on students vocabulary banks would improve our students reading comprehension considerably.

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Appendix 1

Synonyms task: Student form

John Munro

Student name: _____ Grade: _____

Date: _____

	Target word	Possible correct responses	Child's response
1.	small	tiny, little, wee, mini, miniature, short, shrimp, slight, stunted, teensy, minor, trifling	
2.	fast	quick, rapid, brisk, snappy, speedy, hasty, swift	
3.	old	aged, ancient, elderly, experienced, geriatric, senior, veteran, outdated, stale	
4.	leave	go, clear out, scam, stop	
5.	car	vehicle, automobile, sedan	
6.	shoe	boot, slipper, runners, sneaker	
7.	child	boy, girl, infant, tot, baby, youngster, brat, kid, kiddie, toddler	
8.	fat	rotund, plump, overweight, burly, corpulent, obese, oversize, paunchy, portly, stout, blubbery, bulk, lard	
9.	walk	stroll, amble, hike, march, pathway, amble, tramp	
10.	cat	kitten, moggy, puss, leopard, lion, tabby	
11.	fatigued	tired, all in, beat, exhausted, weary, worn-out, zonked, sapped	
12.	boat	ship, types of boats	
13.	clean	neat, tidy, clear, flawless, trim, sparkling	
14.	sick	ill, unhealthy, unwell, weak, queasy, diseased,	
15.	tiger	cat, cheetah, cougar, jaguar, leopard, lion, panther	

16.	engine	motor machine, apparatus, appliance, gadget	
17.	ignore	disregard, avoid, cut, neglect, omit, overlook, reject	
18.	precious	expensive, dear, prized, treasured, valued, invaluable, prized	
19.	angry	mad, irate, crazy, cross, out/enraged, fiery, fuming, furious, storming	
20.	hit	slap, strike, punch, bat, smack, smash, sock, swipe, success, achievement, triumph	
21.	give	donate, provide, contribute, dole out	
22.	stop	prevent, bar, impede, halt, end, block, close, finish, terminate, rest, still	
23.	cage	pen, cell, prison, enclosure, coop, cavity, chest	
24.	adolescent	teenager, immature, juvenile, youthful, minor	
25.	station	terminus, headquarters, stop, base, depot, terminal	
26.	release	free, liberate, acquit, let go	
27.	flow	run, move, drift, ooze, stream, abound, progress	
28.	liberate	free, let out, loosen, release	
29.	a building	a construction, edifice, home, house, dwelling, structure	

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Appendix 2
Sentence memory for sentences task: Student form

John Munro

Student name: _____ **Grade:** _____

Date: _____

1. They eat pumpkin.	
2. The rabbit did not run.	
3. They ate the fresh bread from the bakers' shop after they bought the paper	
4. In the bus he could see his friend.	
5. The woman watched the basketball match and the girl ate a pie	
6. The family used their red beach umbrella to avoid the intense sunlight.	
7. The lizard drank the water, the rabbit scratched itself and the boy blew bubbles.	
8. Heavy fog caused several accidents on the highway.	
9. If David walks around the lake he will see the three pink ducklings	
10. The puppies in the box were warm.	
11. It took the younger boys more than ten minutes to eat the apple pie.	
12. In the autumn they often enjoy long bike rides through the park.	
13. She was there with the boats on the river and the dog was under the tree.	
14. Late every afternoon Jack wanted to swim with Ann at the beach.	
15. They were excited about the photos and waited at the corner.	
16. When Jill kicks the ball she drops it quickly onto her left foot.	
17. Before they went into the shop the car tooted its horn loudly.	

18.	As it was cold they decided to move to the other room upstairs	
19.	The class was told to do examples 4 to 7 on page 14 of their word book.	
20.	Jean will paint her doll's house red if she can find yellow flowers.	
21.	Reading is fun as long as the story is interesting and has at least three pictures in each chapter.	
22.	The car was in the scrap yard because we lived in a street nearby	
23.	The old clown explained why he never wore a scarf and shirt that matched.	
24.	All the rats were much slower after the rain had shrunk their paws.	
25.	Tina walked through the bush many times but never once saw the three tiny possums.	
26.	The further the old horse walked, the more his muscles ached and his joints creaked	
27.	The lolly pop lady was a kind person who made the children happy when she wore her plastic roses.	
28.	Once out of the city Peter and his friends plan to stop at they travel to the farm.	
29.	Jean's new truck with the red doors also has a large wide tray which can rise quickly.	
30.	When we go hiking in the bush we prepare to spend a lot of time searching for different kinds of insects on the leaves.	

Appendix 3

Pre- intervention Spontaneous and Cued Retell.

Characteristics of retelling	Ideas in the story	Number of ideas
Main Characters	Greedy cat, Katie, Mum and Dad	4
Theme of story	Katie is making her mother a birthday cake. Greedy cat can smell chocolate and wants to eat some!	3
Plot of story	Greedy cat spends his time trying to get into the kitchen to get at the chocolate cake.	2
Events of the story	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greedy cat could smell chocolate.• Katie was making her mother a birthday cake in the kitchen.• Greedy cat was clawing at Katie to get to the cake.• Katie put Greedy cat outside because he was being a nuisance• Dad arrived home and Greedy cat pushed past him and ran inside• Katie told Dad she had made Mum a cake and hidden it in the cupboard• Katie told Greedy cat to eat the meat and cat biscuits in his bowl	1 1 2 2 2 2 1

The narrative the students read had 20 main literal ideas. The spontaneous and cued retell for each of the students participating in the study is shown below.

Student A re-told the text spontaneously as:

It was about Katie making a birthday cake for her Mum's party. The Greedy cat wanted to eat the yummy chocolate cake. Katie told the greedy cat to go outside because of the yawning that the greedy cat caused. *This retell specifies 3 main literal ideas. His retelling did not exceed 15%.*

For the text above, the questions **Student A** was asked and his response are shown below:

- What were the names of the main characters? *Katie and the greedy cat* (2 marks)
- Where does the story take place? *In the middle* (0 marks)
- What can Greedy cat smell? *The chocolate cake* (1 mark)
- What is Katie making? *A chocolate cake* (1 mark)
- Why did Katie put the cat outside? *Because of the loud yawning* (1/2 mark)
- What happened when Dad came home? *The cat went through Dad's legs* (1 mark)
- What was the secret Katie told Dad? *She hid the chocolate cake in a safe place* (1 mark)

- How did Katie know the cat was hungry? *Of course of the yawning and the tongue out* (1/2 mark)
- What did Katie give Greedy cat for his dinner? *Cat biscuits* (1/2 mark)
- What did Greedy cat want for his dinner? *Chocolate cake* (1 mark)

Student A recalled 15% of the main ideas spontaneously and an additional 42.5% under cued comprehension.

Student B re-told the text spontaneously as:

The greedy cat was gunna try steal the chocolate. Katie wasn't letting him. Her mother's birthday tomorrow. She was gunna make it and greedy cat wanted to steal it. He was hungry about the cake and he purred softly and she gave him cat biscuits.

This retelling specifies, at the most 4 main ideas. His retelling score did not exceed 20%

For the text above, the questions **Student B** was asked and his response are shown below:

- What were the names of the main characters? *Katie, Dad and the cat* (3 mark)
- Where does the story take place? *I don't know* (0 marks)
- What can Greedy cat smell? *Chocolate* (1 mark)
- What is Katie making? *Chocolate cake* (1 mark)
- Why did Katie put the cat outside? *She didn't want him to meow* (1 mark)
- What happened when Dad came home? *He was cross about the cat* (0 marks)
- What was the secret Katie told Dad? *That she was making a birthday cake for her Mum* (1/2 mark)
- How did Katie know the cat was hungry? *Don't know* (0 mark)
- What did Katie give Greedy cat for his dinner? *Cat biscuits* (1/2 mark)
- What did Greedy cat want for his dinner? *The cake* (1 mark)

Student B recalled 20% of the main ideas spontaneously and an additional 40% under cued comprehension.

Student C re-told the text spontaneously as:

The cat was trying to get the chocolate cake but Katie didn't let the cat eat the chocolate. He said to him that he still had some biscuits in his bowl. The cat purred. He didn't want to eat it. He wanted to eat the chocolate cake. This retelling specifies 3 main ideas. His retelling did not exceed 15%

For the text above, the questions **Student C** was asked and his response are shown below:

- What were the names of the main characters? *Katie* (1 mark)
- Where does the story take place? *I don't know* (0 marks)
- What can Greedy cat smell? *Chocolate* (1 mark)
- What is Katie making? *Chocolate cake* (1 mark)
- Why did Katie put the cat outside? *The cat was trying to get the cake to eat it* (1 mark)

- What happened when Dad came home? *The cat ran in the door again* (1 marks)
- What was the secret Katie told Dad? *There was a chocolate cake for her Mum* (1/2 mark)
- How did Katie know the cat was hungry? *Don't know* (0 mark)
- What did Katie give Greedy cat for his dinner? *Biscuits* (1/2 mark)
- What did Greedy cat want for his dinner? *Chocolate* (1 mark)

Student C recalled 15% of the main ideas spontaneously and an additional 35% under cued comprehension.

Control A re-told the text spontaneously as:

I read about a greedy cat who has been greedy a lot. He loves chocolate cake. He wants to eat it but Katie hides it. *This retelling specifies 3 main ideas. His retelling does not exceed 15%.*

For the text above, the questions **Control A** was asked and his response are shown below:

- What were the names of the main characters? *Katie, Greedy cat, Dad* (3 marks)
- Where does the story take place? *It takes place in a chocolate cake* (0 marks)
- What can Greedy cat smell? *Chocolate* (1 mark)
- What is Katie making? *A cake* (1 mark)
- Why did Katie put the cat outside? *Because the cat wanted the cake* (0 marks)
- What happened when Dad came home? *Greedy cat annoyed Dad* (1 mark)
- What was the secret Katie told Dad? *That she hid the cake somewhere* (1 mark)
- How did Katie know the cat was hungry? *Because he Meowed* (1 mark)
- What did Katie give Greedy cat for his dinner? *Cat biscuits and meat* (1 marks)
- What did Greedy cat want for his dinner? *Chocolate cake* (1 mark)

Control A recalled 15% of the main ideas spontaneously and an additional 40% under cued comprehension.

Control B re-told the text spontaneously as:

It was about a greedy cat and there was a birthday and a girl named Katie and she was making a chocolate cake for her Mum and the cat jumped up and was going Meow. Katie didn't understand but the cat wanted to eat the cake. Um the cat wanted to eat the cake. That's all. I don't know what else.

This retelling specifies 5 main ideas. His retelling score did not exceed 25%.

For the text above, the questions **Control B** was asked and his response are shown below:

- What were the names of the main characters? *Katie and Greedy* (2marks)
- Where does the story take place? *Outside* (0 marks)
- What can Greedy cat smell? *Chocolate* (1 mark)
- What is Katie making? *A chocolate cake* (1 mark)

- Why did Katie put the cat outside? *Because the cat was too loud* (1/2 mark)
- What happened when Dad came home? *Dad almost fell down* (1/2mark)
- What was the secret Katie told Dad? *That it is Mum's birthday* (0 marks)
- How did Katie know the cat was hungry? *Because it was going Meow* (1 mark)
- What did Katie give Greedy cat for his dinner? *Cat biscuit and fish* (1/2 mark)
- What did Greedy cat want for his dinner? *He wanted chocolate* (1 mark)

Control B recalled 25% of the main ideas spontaneously and an additional 37.5% under cued comprehension.

This text contains a number of inferential ideas but because this particular study is focusing on the children's gains at the literal level these have not been included in this retell.

Appendix 4

Post-Intervention Spontaneous and cued retell.

Characteristics of retelling	Ideas in the story	Number of ideas
Main Characters	Greedy cat, Katie, Mum and Dad	4
Theme of story	Katie is making her mother a birthday cake. Greedy cat can smell chocolate and wants to eat some!	3
Plot of story	Greedy cat spends his time trying to get into the kitchen to get at the chocolate cake.	2
Events of the story	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greedy cat could smell chocolate.• Katie was making her mother a birthday cake in the kitchen.• Greedy cat was clawing at Katie to get to the cake.• Katie put Greedy cat outside because he was being a nuisance• Dad arrived home and Greedy cat pushed past him and ran inside• Katie told Dad she had made Mum a cake and hidden it in the cupboard• Katie told Greedy cat to eat the meat and cat biscuits in his bowl	1 1 2 2 2 2 1

The narrative the students read had 20 main literal ideas. The spontaneous and cued retell for each of the students participating in the study is shown below.

Student A re-told the text spontaneously as:

The Greedy cat wanted the chocolate cake and the cat wanted to eat the chocolate cake but Katie didn't let him. Katie locked him out the door and when Dad came home Greedy cat ran through Dad's legs and Katie told Dad she'd hidden the chocolate cake in a safe place. This retell specifies 4 main literal ideas. His retelling did not exceed 20%

For the text above, the questions **Student A** was asked and his response are shown below:

- What were the names of the main characters? *Katie, Dad and the greedy cat* (3 marks)
- Where does the story take place? *In the middle* (0 marks)
- What can Greedy cat smell? *The chocolate cake* (1 mark)
- What is Katie making? *A chocolate cake for mum's birthday party* (2 mark)
- Why did Katie put the cat outside? *Because of the loud yowling* (1/2 mark)
- What happened when Dad came home? *Katie told Dad that she'd hidden the birthday cake* (0 mark)

- What was the secret Katie told Dad? *She put the chocolate cake in a hiding behind the door* (1/2 mark)
- How did Katie know the cat was hungry? *Because the cat yowled at Katie* (1/2 mark)
- What did Katie give Greedy cat for his dinner? *Fish meat and cat biscuits* (1 mark)
- What did Greedy cat want for his dinner? *Chocolate cake* (1 mark)

Student A recalled 20% of the main ideas spontaneously and an additional 47.5% under cued comprehension.

Student B re-told the text spontaneously as:

Greedy cat wanted the cake and then he meowed at Katie, the girl who was making the birthday cake for her Mum. Her birthday is on the next day so... when she was... ummm.....gunna put greedy cat outside because she couldn't stand the yowling. Then Dad came home and greedy cat ran through dad's legs and rubbed against it and greedy cat was...um... when dad opened the kitchen door Greedy cat raced in and dad asked how was the birthday cake and Katie said great and Katie whispered to dad she hid it in a safe place and then greedy cat heard. This retelling specifies, at the most 6 main ideas. His retelling score did not exceed 30%

For the text above, the questions **Student B** was asked and his response are shown below:

- What were the names of the main characters? *Katie, Dad and the cat* (3 mark)
- Where does the story take place? *In Katie's house* (1/2 marks)
- What can Greedy cat smell? *Chocolate* (1 mark)
- What is Katie making? *Chocolate cake* (1 mark)
- Why did Katie put the cat outside? *Cause he was yowling* (1 mark)
- What happened when Dad came home? *Greedy cat raced in* (1 marks)
- What was the secret Katie told Dad? *She put the cake in a special place* (1/2 mark)
- How did Katie know the cat was hungry? *Cause she asked him* (1/2 mark)
- What did Katie give Greedy cat for his dinner? *Cat biscuits and meat* (2 mark)
- What did Greedy cat want for his dinner? *Chocolate* (1 mark)

Student B recalled 20% of the main ideas spontaneously and an additional 57.5% under cued comprehension.

Student C re-told the text spontaneously as:

The cat he wanted chocolate and Katie said no and the cat purred and she took him out-side and when dad went home the cat went between his leg and when he went inside she said this cat was naughty and her dad said how's the cake and she said the cake is great and she said to his dad she whispered that she made icing cake and a pink candle on top. This retelling specifies 4 main ideas. His retelling did not exceed 20%

For the text above, the questions **Student C** was asked and his response are shown below:

- What were the names of the main characters? *Katie and Greedy cat* (2 mark)
- Where does the story take place? *The Chocolate cake* (0 marks)
- What can Greedy cat smell? *Chocolate* (1 mark)
- What is Katie making? *Chocolate cake* (1 mark)
- Why did Katie put the cat outside? *Because it was hungry but it was Mum's birthday cake and he wanted to eat chocolate* (1 mark)
- What happened when Dad came home? *He said why didn't the cat go in his own flap* (1 marks)
- What was the secret Katie told Dad? *She put icing on the chocolate cake. She put a pink candle on top* (0 mark)
- How did Katie know the cat was hungry? *Cause he purred* (1/2 mark)
- What did Katie give Greedy cat for his dinner? *Meat and cat Biscuits* (1 mark)
- What did Greedy cat want for his dinner? *Chocolate cake* (1 mark)

Student C recalled 20% of the main ideas spontaneously and an additional 42.5% under cued comprehension.

Control A re-told the text spontaneously as:

It was a story about a greedy cat who loves chocolate cake. He wanted Katie to give him the chocolate cake without dad knowing. So he meowed in his cutest voice to ask for the chocolate cake. *This retelling specifies 3 main ideas. His retelling does not exceed 15%.*

For the text above, the questions **Control A** was asked and his response are shown below:

- What were the names of the main characters? *Katie, Greedy cat, Dad* (3 marks)
- Where does the story take place? *In a chocolate cake* (0 marks)
- What can Greedy cat smell? *Chocolate cake* (1 mark)
- What is Katie making? *A cake* (1 mark)
- Why did Katie put the cat outside? *Because greedy cat wanted the chocolate cake* (0 marks)
- What happened when Dad came home? *Greedy cat went into the kitchen to look for the chocolate cake.* (0 mark)
- What was the secret Katie told Dad? *That she hid the chocolate cake where greedy cat couldn't get to it.* (1 mark)
- How did Katie know the cat was hungry? *Because he looked at his fish and said 'I want chocolate cake'* (0 mark)
- What did Katie give Greedy cat for his dinner? *Cat biscuits and meat* (1 marks)
- What did Greedy cat want for his dinner? *Chocolate cake* (1 mark)

Control A recalled 15% of the main ideas spontaneously and an additional 40% under cued comprehension.

Control B re-told the text spontaneously as:

It was about a cat, he was a greedy cat. There was a girl named Katie, she was making a chocolate cake for her mum. It was hers mums birthday. Then the cat smelled the chocolate and he wanted chocolate and then Katie said 'why won't you eat your meat and cat biscuit?' Then he meowed his loudest. Then Katie maked him go out and when dad was going home greedy cat was on the step door, then he rushed into dad's leg and then dad said 'Why don't you go in your own flap?' Then Katie whispered to his dad, ' we have to get ready for the party tomorrow' and she's hidden the cake.

This retelling specifies 5 main ideas. His retelling score did not exceed 25%.

For the text above, the questions **Control B** was asked and his response are shown below:

- What were the names of the main characters? *Katie and Greedy* (2marks)
- Where does the story take place? *Inside and Outside* (0 marks)
- What can Greedy cat smell? *Chocolate* (1 mark)
- What is Katie making? *A chocolate cake* (1 mark)
- Why did Katie put the cat outside? *Because the cat was too noisy* (1/2 mark)
- What happened when Dad came home? *He said to greedy cat to go in his own door* (1/2 mark)
- What was the secret Katie told Dad? *That Katie hid the cake* (1 marks)
- How did Katie know the cat was hungry? *Because the cat meowed in a soft voice* (1 mark)
- What did Katie give Greedy cat for his dinner? *Cat biscuit and meat* (1 mark)
- What did Greedy cat want for his dinner? *He wanted chocolate* (1 mark)

Control B recalled 25% of the main ideas spontaneously and an additional 45% under cued comprehension.

This text contains a number of inferential ideas but because this particular study is focusing on the children's gains at the literal level these have not been included in this retell.

Appendix 5

Sample of teaching sequence.

Session one.

Activity	Task description- Synonyms and word meanings	Time
Introduction to Teaching sequence- Clarifying terms	Ask students ‘What is a synonym?’ Children share examples. Teacher models examples. Write example down. Look at the title of the text, ‘Beating the drought’- What does it mean? Can you say this title in another way? Share children’s ideas with the group.	7-10 mins.
Word building- Focus on target words.	Look at the characters on the front cover. Who are they? Can you describe them? Make a list of words to describe these characters. Look at the list of words you have. Let’s say them altogether. Can you think of words to match the ones in your list? Share with group. Write these words down.	5-7 mins.
Manipulating and experimenting with synonyms.	Children put words into context and write them in a sentence. Cut up sentences and have children put them back together again. Have children swap synonyms from one sentence to another where appropriate. Read over sentences to see that changes make sense. Read new sentences out loud.	10-12 mins.
Reflective	Ask the students what they have learned today. Share and compare. Give assistance to students having difficulty verbalizing their learning.	5 mins.

Sessions two- ten.

Each of session's two to ten follow the same teaching sequence. However, the 'Manipulate and experiment with synonyms' sessions will change each day as will the Target words and the text reading. Please see the list of activities and target words for each of these sessions in the table below.

Activity	Task description- Synonyms and word meanings	Time
Clarify terms	Revise and recap- What is a synonym? Discuss target words from previous session. Go over synonyms and meanings of individual words.	5-7 mins.
Text Reading	Read pages 3-6 of text. (Individually, as a group)	5-7 mins.
Target words	Target words- gazing, groaned, switched, bad, shifted, giggled Give children list of target words for the session. Discuss word meanings.	7-10 mins
Build synonyms list and meanings	Replace target words with synonyms. Students to write synonyms list. Have children orally put synonyms into sentences	5-7 mins.
Manipulate and experiment with synonyms	Have children look through newspapers and magazines for synonyms to match the sessions target words. Replace their cut out synonyms in sentences and read out loud to group.	12-14 mins.
Reflective	Ask children 'What new things have you learned today? Share and compare	5 mins.

Session	Manipulate and experiment with synonyms activity	Text reading and target words.
Three	Close activity- Children to find synonyms to replace the underlined words in the given text.	Pages 7-9 Live, largest, other, pull, soaked, beginning
Four	As a group, put our synonyms into a nonsense verse. Read individually and out loud	Pages 10-12 Few, starting, cold, scooped, asked, greasy
Five	Act out the synonyms we have made for today's target words. Children take in turns with guessing the synonym	Pages 13-15 Went, chosen, embarrassed, big, came, stop
Six	'What am I?' word quiz. Take in turns selecting a synonym and have children ask questions about the word.	Pages 16-18 Looking, larger, started, cut, fetch, seriously
Seven	Making lists of words. E.g. Talking words, walking words, how things feel, ways of looking etc. Put synonyms into the above categories.	Pages 19-21 Got, walked, rubbed, stepped, pushed, moved
Eight	Play matching games with flash cards using words from the text reading.	Pages 22-24 Care, polish, muttered, warm, passing, smiling
Nine	Play synonyms game on the computer. Children to choose from easy, moderate or advanced synonyms matching games. Go to http://www.cogcon.com/game_goo/gooney.html	Pages 25-27 Said, twitching, held, worked, want, took
Ten	Model and then write as a group, a silly story using today's synonyms. All read aloud and then as a group, act out the story.	Pages 28-31 Burst, sick, slurping, grinned, wafted, smell.

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