Teaching paraphrasing improves reading comprehension

Abstract:

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of implementing the paraphrasing strategy as an aid to improving reading comprehension. The participants in this study were two male and two female, eight year old, Year Three students. Each of them has an ESL background and three students speak a language other than English at home. They were recognised as students with limited vocabulary and reading comprehension difficulties so it was planned to teach them to use synonyms to paraphrase while reading. Pre testing was administered to establish reading accuracy, vocabulary competence and comprehension levels. The study used a simplified version of the Paraphrasing Strategy (Schumaker, et al., 1984 as cited in Parker et al., 2002). The students learnt a reading comprehension strategy that was remembered by the acronym RAP – Read, Ask questions, Put into your own words. Post test results provided evidence that students who received intervention improved their reading comprehension. The study proved to have a positive effect on paraphrasing, comprehension and extending the students vocabulary. A by-product of the intervention, which was noted by the classroom teacher, was the increase in confidence and the enthusiasm to want to share RAP with their peers. These findings suggest the usefulness of the paraphrasing strategy in addressing reading comprehension problems.

Introduction:

Learning to read is an effortful, long-term process that requires sustained motivation on the part of the reader. Reading strategy instruction is one way to promote motivation. Previous research indicates that reading strategy instruction creates more positive attitudes about reading and can improve achievement (Guthrie et al., as cited in McCrudden et al., 2005).

As the world's classrooms become more diverse in terms of the types of learners served in general education, instructional procedures that benefit *all* students will be invaluable to regular classroom teachers. Gains in reading comprehension have the potential for even greater growth when all teachers actively support the instructional interventions that include cognitive and behavioural elements (Katims & Harris, 1997).

What may also need to be considered is how children feel and behave when they are learning as this too may affect their learning capacity and success. Research into this aspect of self-efficacy being related to reading comprehension and retention of successful strategies has proven that there is a link between the two. Self-efficacy is a person's confidence to perform a task successfully and is linked closely to initial task engagement, persistence and achievement (Bandura, 1993; Pajares, 1996 as cited in McCrudden et al., 2005).

Students with greater self-efficacy are more likely to select challenging tasks, expend more effort, and persist when encountering difficulties (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 1996 as cited in McCrudden et al., 2005). Reading strategy instruction is one way to increase self-efficacy for reading comprehension. A study was carried out in 1991 whereby remedial fifth-graders were instructed to identify main ideas in a text (Schunk & Rice, 1991 as cited in McCrudden et al., 2005). They found that strategy instruction increased self-efficacy for reading comprehension as well as reading achievement. Therefore, high self-efficacy is

an important factor in helping students engage in and persist at a difficult task, such as reading for understanding (McCrudden et al., 2005).

Tutors, who teach learning strategies, teach students how to learn, rather than teaching them specific curriculum content or specific skills. The use of learning strategies helps students maintain interest and concentration during many learning tasks (Clark et al., 1984; Nelson & Smith, 1992 as cited in Parker et al., 2002).

Often children's lack of understanding will impinge on their ability to process their reading and a limited vocabulary does not enable them to successfully respond to what they have read. Comprehension depends on word-level processing. Acquisition of context strategies for vocabulary development provides students a transferable method that applies to all subject areas (Greitz Miller, & Calfee, 2004). The present study has been undertaken as students were recognised as needing support to enhance their limited vocabulary. The use of synonyms was encouraged and to enable their comprehension levels to improve the explicit teaching of the paraphrasing strategy was implemented. When carrying out this intervention it was also planned that the teacher would focus on building up the students perceptions of themselves as learners.

A recent national inquiry into the teaching of literacy presented findings on effective teaching practices for reading during the early years. The incontrovertible finding, from the extensive body of local and international evidence-based reading research, is that children in the early years of schooling must first master the alphabetic code via systematic, explicit, and intensive instruction in: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension strategies. Because these are *foundational* and *essential* skills for the development of competence in reading, writing and spelling, they must be taught early, explicitly, and well (DEST, 2005 pg 25).

Caroline Milburn presented an even more public airing of similar views in The Age in an article titled "Learning from the best". Here she referred to the most effective teachers as

those who drew on a much wider repertoire of teaching practices thus enabling their students to make big gains in literacy. Professor William Louden, who headed the study "In Teachers' Hands" stated, "The most important finding of our study was that it is the teaching practices employed in the implementation of an activity, rather than the activity itself, that distinguishes between the more effective and less effective teacher."(The Age, 2006).

Perhaps questions to raise here are: Have all literacy skills received the same amount of priority in the multi-age classrooms since the inception of CLaSS and the Early Years Program? Has the same emphasis been given to the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies as to instruction in decoding skills when teaching children to read?

Studies of first-grade literacy block (PDR study Carlisle, 2003-4) asked the following questions:

On what aspects of literacy are teachers working?

The answers were: lots of time spent on phonics, 'centres', writing (workbooks, handouts, etc.), fluency (oral reading) and much less time on comprehension, vocabulary or assessment.

With whom is the teacher working?

The answers were: most often the whole class and infrequently small groups or individuals

Results suggested:

There was little use of flexible grouping arrangements to meet the needs of struggling readers and relatively little attention to vocabulary and comprehension (Carlisle, 2004 pg 16).

In the present study it was decided to implement the explicit teaching of the paraphrasing strategy within a small group situation so as to enhance the reading comprehension of the students involved in the study. The inability to make links with texts and having well developed oral language knowledge is a critical factor inhibiting the understanding or

comprehension of a text. Children who have limited vocabulary or lack personal experiences so that prior knowledge cannot be activated will need both support and explicit teaching to improve their levels of comprehension of a variety of texts.

One of the most crucial elements of supporting reading development is the explicit teaching of reading strategies so readers are able to access their prior knowledge during reading. The process of comprehending texts involves much more than the ability to decode words. A reader must actively integrate a range of strategies including both word identification and comprehension strategies to draw upon all available knowledge in the form of cues (DET. WA2004).

Furthermore, Duke (2003) has identified five essential components for effective teaching of comprehension strategies. The five components are as follows:

1. An explicit description of the strategy and when and how it should be used.

2. Teacher and/or student modelling of strategy in action.

3. Collaborative use of the strategy in action.

4. Guided practice using the strategy with gradual release of responsibility.

5. Independent use of the strategy.

These components are adapted from the Strategic Instruction Model (Ellis, et al., 1991).

Similarly, another study (Schumaker, et al., 1984 as cited in Parker et al., 2002) found that students effectively learn reading comprehension using metacognitive techniques, such as recalling the steps in a strategy by use of an acronym. The use of an acronym, in this case, RAP, is a metacognitive technique common to a Strategic Instruction Model (Ellis et al., 1991 as cited in Parker et al., 2002).

1. Read a paragraph;

2. Ask yourself; what were the main ideas and details in this paragraph?

3. Put the main idea and details into your own words

Acronyms are taught to students in order to trigger or activate their inner, cognitive dialogues and to have them think about and actively apply the steps in a particular strategy. In the case of the RAP paraphrasing strategy the acronym serves such a purpose, but this particular acronym also helps to remind students to keep on 'rapping', or talking to themselves as a way to improve their reading comprehension (Katims & Harris 1997). It was decided that a modified version of this strategy would be incorporated into the present study in each teaching session.

Paraphrasing is the restating or the rewriting of a text into one's own words (DET, WA. 2004). It involves readers retelling a sentence 'in their own words'. Their task is to generate a literal representation of a sentence read by substituting as many of the words and phrases in it (Munro 2004). This strategy is one that may be explicitly taught to support both the development of oral language and reading comprehension. Vocabulary development certainly has a link to students' ability to verbalise their understandings. Students need to be encouraged and taught how to look at words in context and to then talk about them, as comprehension depends on processing at a word/sentence level. The intervention strategy, paraphrasing, is a while reading strategy used to help make sense of the text. If the stages of reading are looked at, paraphrasing is found at the sentence level within the Levels of Text Processing (Munro 2005 pg 91). It would be hoped though, that within the present study, the students' attempts to paraphrase would progress from the sentence to the paragraph.

Research has shown that comprehension instruction can improve the reading comprehension of all readers, even beginning readers and struggling older readers. It will help your students to understand, remember and communicate with others about what they read. Most importantly, it will help your students want to read more! (Snowball, 2006 pg 62).

Present Study:

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the effectiveness of implementing the paraphrasing strategy as an aid to improving the reading comprehension of students in this study. It will also focus on the teaching of synonyms as a support to the paraphrasing strategy. The instruction will be scaffolded to include explicit explanation and modelling of the strategy, discussion of why and when to use it and practice in how to use it.

This study is based on the hypothesis that teaching Year Three students to use synonyms to paraphrase while reading will improve their comprehension.

Design:

An XOX design will be used in this case study in which the ability to paraphrase readily through the use of synonyms will be monitored for a group of Year Three students who have comprehension difficulties.

Participants:

The participants are four, Year Three students, two male and two female, who are experiencing reading difficulties. These difficulties are more obvious if the students need to respond to a text (that is talk about the text, respond to questioning or offer own opinion of the text). Their teacher observed that they all had difficulty expressing themselves orally, had a limited vocabulary and often did not display a clear understanding of what they read. It was also noted that they did not display a great deal of the self-confidence needed to respond to a larger group. All four students have an ESL background and three of these students have families who speak a language other than English at home. One male student attends Language School on a Saturday to learn his mother tongue. Three students have been involved in the Reading Recovery intervention program when in Year One (see Table 1 for levels at which students were discontinued). Since that intervention occurred they have continued to be assisted in multi-age classrooms with whole class teaching and some small group focus teaching. A fourth student, Student A, was reading

at Level 28 at the end of Year One. Student B exhibits the same difficulties with speech as other members of the family. This may be connected to the student's mother tongue as differences in the pronunciation of particular sounds in that language cause confusions in the way they are heard and then pronounced in English. It was noticed that this made some difference to the decoding of words when reading from the Determiner. However, it did not seem to make any difference to what was understood by the student.

Further background information for each student may be found in Table 1.

Background Information

GROUP	SEX	AGE	Language (mainly) spoken at home	Previous Intervention	Sensory Impairment
Student A	M	8yrs 3mths	Sinhalese	None	
Student B	M	8yrs 11mth	Polish	Reading Recovery …Instructional Level 18	Speech##
Student C	F	8yrs 10mth	English	Reading Recovery … Instructional Level 16	
Student D	F	8yrs 3mths	Sinhalese	Reading Recovery … Instructional Level 16	Sight...glasses for reading

Table 1

Materials:

The students will be tested using the items listed below both prior to and at the completion of the teaching sessions. The word reading task will only be used the once in the pre test to determine a starting point for the prose reading.

Oral retelling or paraphrasing assessment was made using the model suggested in the Literacy Intervention Strategies course notes (Munro, 2005, pg 62). Information was gathered and recorded under the following headings: Main character/s, Theme of story, Plot of story, Events of the story, Inferential ideas (infer, predict, explain, and read between the lines). For an example of the chart see Appendix 4.

Other assessment items used include the following:

- **Prose Reading Observation, Behaviour & Evaluation of Comprehension Triune, 1999**

  PROBE Determiner (word reading task used to determine at which level to begin prose reading assessment)

  PROBE … Reading aloud was assessed by using selected passages (Fiction texts) at each child's appropriate level

- **Record of Oral Language: -**

  …a tool for assessing a student's level of understanding of increasingly complex grammatical structures. (Clay, Gill, Glynn, McNaughton and Salmon, 1983)

- **Synonyms Word Test:**

  An oral test used to determine the ability to offer alternative words for 'given' words (Munro,2005)… see Appendix 5.

- **PM Benchmark:**

  Reading Record, Assessment Record and Text (Nelson, 2000) appropriate level selected for each student

- 6 to 8 narratives selected from school library that are lower than the students instructional level of reading at beginning of teaching sessions

- 2 non fiction texts connected to the students learning within the current class topic (Think It, Make It, Create It)

- '**Animalia' Posters** by Graham Base: used to introduce the use of synonyms and later in the sessions used as follow up activity if the rest of the class still engaged in other activities.

- **Chart**:   RAP poster

  What to do when I read (see Appendix 2)

Procedure:

There was some discussion with the classroom teacher as to which students required support to improve their comprehension. All students were administered the pre and post tests. The teaching sessions were held in the students' classroom within the literacy block at the same time each day (when possible). The session ran for approximately 40 – 45 minutes each day. There were ten teaching sessions.

These sessions incorporated the learning about synonyms and the use of the paraphrasing strategy RAP: Read, Ask questions, Put in your own words. This strategy was introduced initially through the use of Graeme Base's 'Animalia' posters. Here, the group worked on one sentence. This was to incorporate the teaching of synonyms to aid paraphrasing. The students, working in pairs, then had another go and recorded 'suggestions'. The teacher recorded a group record of word alternatives. This was to be displayed at a later date as 'other words for…' chart (see Appendix 3). After the initial session the other teaching sessions followed, as much as possible, the same format or outline. The sessions followed a modified version of the main instructional steps suggested by Katims & Harris, 1997.

Session Outline:

1. Cue…the teacher has the students verbally rehearse the meaning of each step of the paraphrasing strategy…RAP. The teacher would then use the metacognitive method of verbally and physically modelling it (using a think aloud procedure) while asking students to name the steps in the procedure.

2. Do…the students and the teacher read together sections of the text (starting with single sentences and progressing to paragraphs as students become more comfortable using the strategy). The passage is then 'turned over' (this encourages the student to use their own words) and questions are asked about the section read. Either the students or the teacher may ask the questions…initially the teacher

may have to model the type of questioning needed. After having read ask: Why was it…? How do you think…? What else could…?

Students are directed to think about main ideas without referring back to the passage.

3. Review…the teacher then encourages the students to put the main ideas and key points into their own words. Students will need to take turns to offer their paraphrasing of that particular section of the text.

A poster, of the strategy, was also created and displayed in the classroom.
This was to remind students of the steps to use at times other than the directed teaching sessions (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Read

Ask questions

Put in your own words
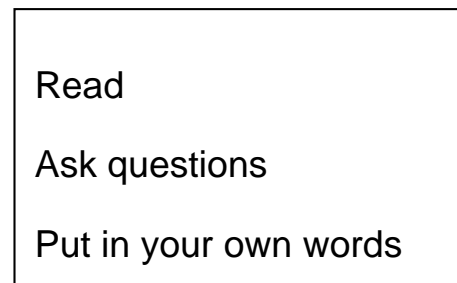
Steps for paraphrasing

During each session (or as close to the end of each session as possible) notes will be made recording each students participation level, active or otherwise. It will also be necessary to review the 'teaching plan' and adapt to the students needs.

Further information regarding the teaching sessions may be found in Appendix 1.

Results:

The results from both the pre and post testing may be found in Table 2.

Results of Pre and Post Testing

Assessment	Student A Age 8.3		Student B Age 8.11		Student C Age 8.10		Student D Age 8.3	
	PRE TEST	**POST TEST**	**PRE TEST**	**POST TEST**	**PRE TEST**	**POST TEST**	**PRE TEST**	**POST TEST**
PROBE Determiner	Set 9 9-10yrs	N/A	Set 5 7-8yrs	N/A	Set 7 8-9yrs	N/A	Set 5 7-8yrs	N/A
Reading Accuracy	98%	98%	96%	97%	97%	97%	94%	98%
Reading Comprehension	40%	70%	50%	62%	75%	88%	12%	62%
Synonyms Task	9/29	19/29	10/29	12/29	17/29	17/29	7/29	10/29
Record of Oral Language	35/42	40/42	27/42	34/42	36/42	37/42	25/42	26/42
Oral Retell / Paraphrasing	58%	91%	35%	85%	100%	100%	42%	100%

Table 2

Analysis of the Data:

The PROBE Determiner indicated that: Student A was decoding at a level higher than chronological age; Students B and D were decoding at a level lower than their chronological age; and Student C was decoding at an age appropriate level. When administering the prose reading for the age indicated, prior to the intervention, all four students were able to read with a very high accuracy rate. However, although the accuracy was high, all students, with the exception of Student C, read in a stilted, stop start fashion with only some runs of fluency. The oral retell scores for three students, Students A, B and D, indicated that they were unable to keep in their memory the key points of the story and were only able to verbalise half or less than half the key ideas. On the other hand Student C was able to recall all main events and ideas. The reading comprehension scores were also very low for the same three students, Students A, B, and particularly Student D. Student C's results showed a better understanding of what had

been read and the reading comprehension score was acceptable for that age appropriate level. The Record of Oral Language was administered to ascertain the students' ability to listen, retain and repeat sentences of increasingly difficult structures. Students B and D were unable to maintain the correct use of the tense of verbs, omitted whole sections and often could not remember all sections within the more difficult level three sentences. On the other hand Students A and C managed this task quite well recording only small errors within the retelling of the sentences. These errors included substitutions of prepositions or contractions of some words. The synonyms task, administered prior to the intervention was interesting in that all students found it difficult initially to understand the concept of a synonym. Many options offered were words that may have been associated with the particular word but not a synonym. Again only Student C scored well on the test offering seventeen correct responses, four incorrect and eight no responses (due to not knowing the word). Student A, whom it was noted earlier had recorded a higher than chronological age reading accuracy level, was only able to give nine correct responses, five responses that were associated with the target word but not correct and thirteen no responses (not recognising the word at all). Student B gave ten correct responses, seven incorrect responses (five of these being words associated with the target word) and twelve no responses (not knowing the target word). Student D seemed to have the most difficulty understanding the 'same as' concept. This student gave fifteen incorrect responses (thirteen responses associated with the target word, eight no responses (unsure of the word) and only seven correct responses. All students needed some time to consider their responses and no one really offered automatic responses.

From the items used and the pre testing scores presented it would indicate that three of the students, Students A, B, and D, in the present study are finding it very difficult to understand their reading and are not able to verbalise their thoughts quickly or well. There is an obvious link in their inability to express themselves orally with their limited

vocabulary. Being able to link the text with one's oral language knowledge is critical for comprehension to occur. So, as paraphrasing is one way to make this link easier, the present study continued as planned with one minor change to the post testing arrangement.

As stated before in the pre test items it was apparent that three of the students had very low reading comprehension scores. After some discussion with the classroom teacher it was decided that within the post testing time assessment for prose reading would be the same text used in the pre test for Students A, B, and D. Student C would be administered the fiction piece within the next age range of the PROBE material.

Discussion:

The aim of this study was to determine whether teaching students to use synonyms when paraphrasing their reading would improve comprehension. Benefits were assessed by comparing performances on pre and post test items and from observations made during teaching sessions. Findings were positive, as were the reflections of the students themselves. The overall trend showed that the intervention aided and assisted Students A, B, C and D to display significant improvement in comprehension.

Post testing reflected changes in both behaviour and results. The most obvious changes were evident in the reading comprehension, oral retelling / paraphrasing ability and in the synonyms test results. Student A's results showed huge gains in all areas. Reading comprehension rose by 30%, oral retelling/paraphrasing by 33%, the synonyms task showed ten more responses correct that in the pre test and the record of oral language scores rose from 35 to 40. Student B's reading comprehension rose from 50% to 62%, the synonyms task had only two more correct responses than in the pre test, the record of oral language scores went from 27 to 34 and the greatest improvement was shown in the oral

retelling/paraphrasing task with a 50% jump from pre to post test. I suspect that the student being absent from six teaching sessions may have impeded progress. The findings for Student C showed very similar results as in the pre test in all areas except reading comprehension. It could be said here that this student is working at or above their chronological age level for the oral retelling/paraphrasing task, record of oral language task and when reading accurately. When viewing the results in Table 2 this student's reading comprehension indicated a rise of only 13%. What needs to be taken into consideration here though is the prose reading text was more advanced than the one used in the pre test. The decision to use another level for the post test was made in conjunction with the class teacher. The data showed that Student D made the most drastic improvement in all areas. This was particularly noticeable in the gains made in reading comprehension (a move from 12% to 62%) and the oral retelling tasks (42% to 100%).   All students were able to express themselves in sentences rather than one word or short phrase answers. This could be linked to the improvement shown by all students in the synonyms task. The consistency in reading accuracy was maintained by all students and reading sounded more fluent and expressive in the post tests. The Record of Oral Language task did not contribute much information to the study for all students other than to show who may be having difficulty with more detailed two or three event sentences. Student D made few gains here and may benefit from more oral language listening type activities. In future studies on the effects of teaching paraphrasing to improve comprehension it may not be necessary to use this assessment item.

What cannot be assessed in quite the same way are the student behaviours. As with any reading activity, the more engaged and enthusiastic your students are about the content, the more effective the strategy will be for them. Observations made during the teaching sessions noted a high degree of enthusiasm for the strategy itself. The students picked up the idea of RAP and they actually conducted a RAP session at the beginning and the end

of each teaching time from the fourth session onwards. This involved them putting to rap 'music' the words from the chart. Read, read, read and ask questions. Read, read, read and ask questions. Then put, put in your own words! This reflected a level of interest and enthusiasm that aided in the recall of the RAP strategy. Acronyms are taught to students in order to trigger, or activate their inner cognitive dialogues and to have them think about and actively apply the step in a particular strategy (Katims and Harris, 1997).

The improvement shown in vocabulary use was aided by the prior to reading activity of looking for or predicting words in the text that may not be known by all students and then discussing them. Comprehension depends on word level processing. Acquisition of context strategies for vocabulary development provides students a transferable method that applies to all subject areas (Greitz, Miller & Calfee, 2004). This prior to reading activity was not an original component of the method but was included to cater for the needs of the students.

Within the reading component of the teaching session there was always the 'Stop!' rule. This was where the students stopped reading at a nominated point, asked questions about any words they were unsure of and the words were looked at in context. The students then continued with the 'AP' parts of the RAP.

The students were so keen here that they thought that they could become the 'teachers' so that when the sessions had finished they would teach others in the class about the strategy. This was a great deal different to the group, which had started the intervention not being confident to put their own thoughts into words. Their self-efficacy had obviously grown. Similar studies into this aspect of self-efficacy being related to reading comprehension and retention of successful strategies has proven that there is a link between the two (Bandura, 1993; Pajares, 1996 as cited in McCrudden et al., 2005). Yet another project found that strategy instruction increased self-efficacy for reading comprehension as well as reading achievement. Therefore, high self efficacy is an

important factor in helping students engage in and persist at a difficult task, such as reading for understanding (McCrudden et al., 2005).

A suggestion made here is that further sessions for the teaching of vocabulary would benefit all students involved in the intervention study as well as their classmates. A sequence for teaching vocabulary and new meanings explicitly can be found in 'Teaching Vocabulary' notes (Munro, 2005,pg 5 & 6).

The 5 W's and 1 H strategy (more commonly known as '4W & H') was often implemented. This was a strategy known to the students and Student C suggested the use of it. It involves asking questions beginning with: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How? This was found to be quite a useful tool when students were operating at the 'A' stage of the RAP strategy. Cue cards were made to assist Student D who was finding it the most difficult to put 'thinking' into own words.

The present study raised the question: Why the need for the teaching of reading comprehension strategies? As the pre and post testing results indicated all these students had little trouble decoding to achieve a high reading accuracy level. However their reading comprehension did not match their oral reading ability. The process of comprehending texts involves much more than the ability to decode words. A reader must actively integrate a range of strategies including both word identification and comprehension strategies to draw upon all available knowledge in the form of cues (DET. WA2004). A recent study of first-grade literacy block indicated that teachers spent less time on teaching reading comprehension and vocabulary with relatively little use of flexible grouping arrangements to meet the needs of struggling readers (Carlisle, 2004 pg 16). So are these the implications of this study? How do we create more effective teaching of all reading strategies needed for students to be successful? And, how do we implement these reading strategies into early learning classrooms? Or, could that question be rephrased to say, how do we implement these reading strategies into *all* learning

classrooms? It has been stated that one of the most crucial elements of supporting reading development is the explicit teaching of reading strategies so readers are able to access their prior knowledge during reading (DET. WA2004).   The present study has shown that even over a short period of time the explicit teaching of the paraphrasing strategy, including the work on synonyms, has improved reading comprehension. How much more success would these students be achieving now if this explicit teaching had been provided at an earlier age?

Certain limitations were experienced when implementing the intervention. Not the least of these being the continued absence of a child through illness. Student B was not in attendance for six of the ten sessions and Student A was absent for three of the sessions. The researcher was not the class teacher and had to adjust to class changes of program. The inability to reinforce the strategy within the classroom may have limited its full potential too.

The results from the intervention suggest that these students may benefit from the teaching of further reading comprehension strategies such as visualising and verbalising, summarising (an extension of the paraphrasing strategy) and consolidation of the work on vocabulary.

Further research that this study may suggest could be in the field of oral language use. This project involved working with students from Year Three who have attended formal schooling for four years but found it very difficult to express themselves or to even have the confidence to express themselves. So, my suggestion would be to research how often children are given opportunities to talk, discuss and interact with others within the classroom, what oral language strategies or skills are effectively taught and how best may these be integrated and implemented into our classrooms.

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Appendix 1: Teaching Sessions…approx.40-45 minutes

In each session students were given a Graeme Base poster to work on either to begin the session or to end it. This aided the investigation and thinking about synonyms and how to use different words to say the same thing. Prose reading was a component of each session, except session one. Narrative texts were used more often than non-fiction material, which was used only on two occasions. Where possible, and when the text 'word' used had a number of synonyms, a list was made by the teacher and then displayed in the classroom.

Session 1:

Introduce the term 'synonyms' …a word that has the same meaning as another.

View and discuss Graeme Base's 'C' poster "crafty crimson cats.."

Ask questions: What does it tell us? Who is in the poster?

Teacher to model 'thinking aloud: Yes it could mean that because…I wonder if because the cat is a pinkish red colour that means the same as crimson?

Put into your own words to tell the same thing; try not to use the words on the poster.

Work together to 'have a go' and then students work in pairs to record their own suggestions.

Share results of discussion and what has been recorded.

Change partners if time and have another go.

Teacher to take students suggestions, record on sentence strips, attach to poster and display in classroom.

Session 2:

Review the term synonyms and introduce the RAP paraphrasing strategy.

Explain the connection between the two and what can be done with them.

Review RAP strategy verbalising what the acronym stands for (ask each student in turn to do this).

Read together a sentence recorded on a sentence strip.

Think about what it is saying/**ASK** questions.

Put in your own words. (Synonyms pre-recorded on flash cards to be used if necessary or as models depending on how well the students move into the activity).

Use the paraphrasing RAP strategy as other prepared sentences are paraphrased by the students. (NB: The teacher may still need to model the thinking process of asking questions.)

Follow up activity: Students use Graeme Base's 'Animalia' poster to paraphrase the text on the poster.

Session 3:

Review the term synonym.

Activity: "Yes / No" game. Hand students Yes and No cards. Orally give two words eg. hot/cold. Students listen, decide are they synonyms, select Yes or No card and place face down in front of them, turn over to see answer. Teacher to say: "No, hot is not the same as cold." (Or 'Yes ---- is the same as-----.' depending on the two words used.)

Review the term synonyms and the RAP paraphrasing strategy.

Ask students to explain the connection between the two and what can be done with them.

Read together selected text (NB. a text at lower than instructional level)

Review RAP strategy verbalising what the acronym stands for (ask each student in turn to do this).

Use the paraphrasing RAP strategy as the text is read again stopping at nominated places (NB: The teacher may still need to model the thinking process of asking questions and certain words may need some discussion / ascertain meaning from context within the text)

Follow up activity: students use 'Animalia' poster by Graeme Base to paraphrase the text on the poster.

Sessions 4,5,6,9 & 10: followed a similar pattern to the above session.

NB: The Yes/No game and the "Sentence Strips" could be alternated between sessions for use as the introductory activity.

Sessions 7, 8:

Review the term synonym.

Activity: "Yes / No" game or Sentence Strips

Review the term synonyms and the RAP paraphrasing strategy

Ask students to explain the connection between the two and what can be done with them.

Read together selected text …information text "The Pencil".

Review the RAP strategy.

Re read using the strategy.

Teacher records students paraphrasing for future reference for the whole class.

Appendix 2:

Chart …what to do when we read …children to make suggestions as to what to add under the"RAP" headings

Things we can do when we read…		
• read a 'bit'	• ask questions	• put in your own words

Appendix 3:

OTHER WORDS FOR…			
great	**fast**	**hungry**	**tricky**
huge			sly
large			cunning
big			clever
enormous			

Appendix 4:

A framework for recording a readers retelling performance for a narrative

Characteristics of the retelling	Ideas in the story	Cued recall questions	Number of ideas	Ideas reader mentioned in spontaneous retelling	Responses to cued recall questions
Main characters					
Theme of story					
Plot of the story					
Events of the story					
Inferential ideas (infer, predict, explain, read between the lines)					
Summary data: • recall main ideas					
• recall specific factual information					
• infer and predict ideas					

Appendix 5:

Synonyms task   **John Munro**

Administer the set of words below to one child at a time.   Say to the child*: I am going to say some words. After I say each word, I want you to think of another word that says the same thing. I would like you to tell me the word you think of.   You can take as long as you need.*

Go through the practice words below first.   Then read each of the target words and ask the child to say another word that '*says the same thing'*.   Write the child's first response in the column provided.

After the child has responded, ask "*Did you think of any other words that mean the same as…? Could you say them, please?* "Write down any other words the child mentions in the response column.

The words in the second column are possible synonyms.   Use these to correct the child's responses.

DO NOT SAY ANY OF THE TARGET WORDS IN A SENTENCE. SIMPLY SAY THE WORD. REPEAT IT IF NECESSARY.

Practice: *Thin. Tell me another word that says the same as thin.*   Acceptable answers would be *skinny or slim.*   If the child gives a correct response, ask "*Did you think of other words that also mean thin?" "Could you say them?"*   Record these.

If the child hesitates or provides an incorrect response, say *"You could say skinny or slim. Other words that say the same as thin are skinny or slim.*

Here is another word.   Dog. Tell me another word that says the same as dog. Acceptable answers would include puppy, hound, or terrier. If the child hesitates or provides an incorrect response, say *"You could say puppy, hound, or terrier. Other words that say the same as dog, puppy, hound, or terrier.*

Here us another word.   Slide. Tell me another word that means the same as slide. Acceptable answers would be *slip* or *skid*.   Repeat the instructions above.

Here is another word.   Talk. *Tell me another word that means the same as talk.* Acceptable answers would be *speak, natter, chat* or *say*.   Repeat the instructions above.

Instruction: *Now have a go at each of these words. I will say a word and I want you to say another word that says the same thing.   You can take as long as you want. If you don't hear a word that I say the first time, just tell me and I will say it again.   I will write down what you say.*

	Practice word	Possible correct responses	Child's response
1.	thin	skinny or slim	
2.	dog	puppy, hound, or terrier.	
3.	slide	slip or skid	
4.	talk	speak, natter, chat say	

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, scram, stop	
5.	car	vehicle, automobile, sedan	
6.	shoe	boot, slipper, runners, sneaker	
7.	child	boy, girl, infant, tot, babyyoungster, 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	27
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	