

Teaching year 5 children with reading difficulties, synonyms and discussing word meanings will improve their comprehension

ABSTRACT:

This study aims to investigate that the explicit teaching of word meanings and synonyms to Grade 5 students will increase their vocabulary knowledge and understanding and will then lead to improved literal comprehension. An OXO design was employed. Data was gathered through individual testing and observations during a teaching sequence which comprised of 10 sessions. The sample group of the study comprised of an intervention group of 3 students and control group of 2 students currently in Year 5. All students performed poorly in comprehension and oral language tasks in both testing and classroom situations. The intervention group participated in a series of 10 teaching sessions which targeted the teaching of synonyms. All 5 students participated in pre and post tests which measured the students' ability to retell a text which they had read and to provide appropriate synonyms for a selected list of words. Post test results provide evidence that students who received intervention out performed those students who did not receive it, particularly in the area of providing synonyms and giving a cued retell. It would seem that an emphasis on learning activities which target building up the vocabulary banks of students and linking them to reading would over time improve their ability to comprehend at a literal level.

INTRODUCTION:

Many children from Grades 3-6 experience difficulties in reading comprehension. They are often able to decode words accurately but are unable to gain understanding from what they read. Many of the children who are part of our school community and are part the present study struggle with reading comprehension and it could be suggested that their vocabulary bank is limited and this has a direct impact on their ability to understand what they read.

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 (Baumann, Kame'enui, & Ash 2003). Research has consistently

shown that comprehension difficulty has a higher correlation with vocabulary difficulty than with any other factor in reading Vanniarajan(1997). Joshi (2005) notes that the role of vocabulary in reading has received much less attention in both research and theory than decoding and comprehension strategies

It would seem for children to get meaning from what they read they need both a great many words in their vocabulary and the ability to use various strategies to establish the meanings of new words. Students who don't have a large vocabulary or effective word learning strategies often struggle to comprehend what they read.

Graves (2000) identifies three word learning tasks which can assist children to gain understanding from what they read. One of these tasks being to identify words that are synonyms for words that students already know. Connecting important selection words to familiar synonyms before children read can be an efficient way to help the comprehension of text. The idea of preparing children to read is an idea considered by Christen and Murphy (1991). They contend that research clearly shows that new information must be integrated with what the learner already knows. They feel that teaching vocabulary such as synonyms should be considered when readers lack the necessary background knowledge to read a particular text. Kruger (1990) also argues that pre reading activities are a great help in achieving comprehension of a text.

The choice of reading texts used in class must be carefully chosen if students are going to improve their knowledge of synonyms and thus their vocabulary bank. Texts need to offer the student opportunities to practise using synonyms and thus make new words meaningful to the reader. Texts which are chosen need to be challenging but not frustrating for the reader. Again, preparing the children to read by such activities as making synonym lists seems a valuable teaching practice.

Jenkins, Stein & Wysocki (1984) suggest that although reading is a major source of vocabulary poorer readers learn fewer words than good readers. This maybe explained by the fact that poor readers tend to read easier materials and fewer books than able readers thus their vocabulary banks develop at a much slower rate. Good readers read more, comprehend better and their vocabularies continue to grow and improve. Stanovich, 1986; Walberg & Tsai, 1983 refer to this good reader / bad

reader phenomenon as the *Matthew effect* taken from Matthew's gospel: the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Carver (1994) found that when students read books that are somewhat challenging they have a better opportunity to learn new words than when they read texts that are easy for them. In contrast when students are faced with a text that contains too many unfamiliar words and concepts word learning is not apparent.

One of the components of a reading program involves vocabulary and it is important that students build up their vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary knowledge consists of many different kinds of knowing. Children need to have an interest in words, their meanings and their power. To achieve this interest students need to learn synonyms for words they already know and to clarify and refine the meanings of these familiar words. When learning new words they must build a set of meanings for the word to become a part of their vocabulary bank rather than a single word learnt for a particular text. The National Reading Panel (2000) noted that students who were interested in words were motivated to learn new words and thus saw a new purpose for reading.

Poor readers do not have the ability to access vocabulary knowledge and prior experience to allow them to make sense of what they read quickly and easily. This study hopes to prove that by spending time teaching students synonyms and talking about word meanings will increase their ability to access their vocabulary knowledge and as a result improve their comprehension of a text.

Research suggests that children learn vocabulary as they engage daily in routine conversations with others, as they listen to adults read to them and as they read on their own. (Stahl 1999) Fluent reading adds to students' vocabulary but poor readers do not get this needed practice. Teachers can help these students in particular by deliberately using challenging vocabulary, checking on students understanding and defining words as needed. Rupley, Logan & Nichols (1999) suggest an interactive model of vocabulary instruction that encourages children to discuss, elaborate and demonstrate meanings of new words and provides varied opportunities for them to use them outside of the text to be effective in vocabulary development.

The present study will investigate the hypothesis that teaching year 5 children with reading difficulties, synonyms and discussing word meanings will improve their comprehension. The investigation will involve explicit teaching to a small group and attempt to give further evidence that the teaching of vocabulary can prepare students to read and have success in understanding what they read. It is intended to show that explicit teaching of vocabulary, in this case synonyms to students is necessary; rather assuming students will learn words incidentally.

METHOD:

Design: The study uses a case study OXO design, in which the gain in literal comprehension following explicit teaching of synonyms and word meanings is monitored for Grade 5 students who have difficulty comprehending what they read.

Participants: The participants are 5 fifth grade students who have a history of reading difficulties. All 5 students scored below average scores on the 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.

All 5 students completed the Sentence Memory for Sentence Task (Munro 2005). All participants had difficulty and scored less than 25% for the task. Each of the students experienced difficulty in repeating sentences that contained more than two ideas. The results of this task would suggest that these children have limited oral language for their age.

Student A arrived at the present school in 2005 very little academic background information. It is not known whether he has had any prior intervention. This is his third change of school and may be a consideration in his lack of progress in the area of reading comprehension. Students B & E come from an ESL background where English is not the first language spoken at home and students D and C are from homes where they would hear another language other than English spoken.

Summary data describing entry level characteristics for the participants are shown in the table below.

TABLE 1: ENTRY LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS

NAME	A	B	C	CONTROL A	CONTROL B
D.O.B	16/10/95	16/12/95	18/2/96	2/04/96	11/02/96
READING TEST*	20/45 40%	24/45 48%	22/45 44%	25/45 52%	24/45 48%
SENTENCE MEMORY FOR SENTENCE TASK	5/30	4/30	8/30	6/30	6/30
ESL	x	√	x	x	√
PRIOR INTERVENTION	Not known 3 rd school attended.	No	Small group work 2004	Reading Recovery 2002	Reading Recovery 2002
SENSORY IMPAIRMENT	X	X	X	X	X

* Reading Progress Test

Materials: Materials used included the following

- Reading texts Stay Calm (Bookweb), Lucky, Collections (Rigby)
- Spontaneous and cued retell form (see Appendix 3)
- Synonym Task: Munro 2005 (see Appendix 2)
- Sentence Memory for Sentence Task: Munro 2005 (see Appendix 1)
- Word cards: synonyms which are target words and synonyms which are generated by the students
- Newspapers
- Tape Recorder
- Paper, pencil, whiteboard
- A teacher journal

PROCEDURE:

All 5 students were assessed prior to invention using Munro's Spontaneous and Cued Retelling (2005) of a selected text thus giving an indication of their literal comprehension. The students were also assessed on their ability to repeat sentences with a varying number of events contained in them (Sentence Memory for Sentence Task. Munro 2005) thus giving an indication of their oral language level (see appendix 1) and they also were assessed on their ability to give synonyms for a set of words (Synonym Task Munro 2005). These last two tasks focus on vocabulary levels of the students. The students were divided into 2 groups. A group of 3 (Students A, B, & C) who would receive intervention with explicit teaching of synonyms and word meanings for ten 35-40 minute sessions (see Appendix 4) and a group of 2 (Control A & B) that would act as a control group with no intervention. Upon the completion of the intervention, both the intervention group and the control group were once again assessed using the Spontaneous and Cued Retelling (see appendix 3) and the Synonym Task (see appendix 2).

All 5 participants were individually administered the Pre and Post Tests. For the teaching sessions, the 3 intervention students were withdrawn from their classroom setting. The teaching sessions were not held at the same time each day. Each teaching session was held in the library and was of 35-40 minutes duration. The teaching sessions involved explicit teaching, clarifying, revising, text reading, teacher modelling, student practice, reflection on learning and taking responsibility for learning. The format of the sessions was based Munro's model for modifying instruction in the classroom.

Each session began revising orally what had been done previously, giving emphasis to the target words and their synonyms. The learning outcome of each session was clearly explained to the participants. Reading the text and noting target words each session led to the participants practising to identify synonyms. Completing activities where they were required to use the target words and synonyms in another context allowed the participants to apply their knowledge in more than one context. An important part of the session was to encourage participants to verbalise what they had learnt. The text chosen for the teaching sessions was selected by using the Fry's Readability Procedure, a text which came out as early Grade 5 was used.

Tasks given at the Pre-test and Post-test

Munro's Spontaneous and Cued Retell (2005) was administered individually to the intervention and control groups to assess their literal comprehension. The text used for the retell was chosen by using the Fry's Readability Procedure. The text was at an early Grade 5 level and was used for the pre and post testing. Information at the pre test was good to use in the teaching sessions to show the children how to use synonyms to help understanding of a text rather than focussing on single words.

Munro's Synonym Task (2005) was administered individually to the intervention group and control groups to assess the knowledge of synonyms. The same task was given as a Pre and Post Test. From the pre test I could see that the students needed to use the same grammatical form of words when recalling synonyms if their use of synonyms was going to help their reading comprehension at the literal level.

Munro's Sentence Memory for Sentence Task (2005) was administered individually to the intervention and control groups as a pre test only. This task was given to provide some insight into the students' oral language development.

RESULTS:

SPONTANEOUS & CUED RETELL

In the Pre-test all students scored well below 50% in the spontaneous retell and showed some improvement in the cued retell. In the post Test all students improved in the spontaneous recall and all students showed improvement in the cued retell. All the 3 intervention students recalled the same percentage of events in the spontaneous recall. The control group's performance would seem to show no particular trend. The intervention group showed a greater rate of improvement in Cued Retell in the post test. The intervention group had less variation of scores in the Post Test than the control group.

The group trends support the prediction of this study in that the intervention group showed a greater rate of improvement in the Cued Recall than the control group. The improvement rate of both groups in the Spontaneous Recall does not support the prediction of this study. The table below shows the group trends for the Pre and Post Tests in the Spontaneous and Cued Recall of a Text.

Group Trends: Spontaneous and Cued Retell

	INTERVENTION GROUP		CONTROL GROUP	
	Pre Test Mean%	Post Test Mean %	Pre Test Mean%	Post Test Mean %
SPONTANEOUS RETELL	33.5%	43%	21%	35.5%
CUED RETELL	48%	76%	60.5%	67%

The tables below show individual students Pre and Post Test percentages for the Spontaneous and Cued Retell:

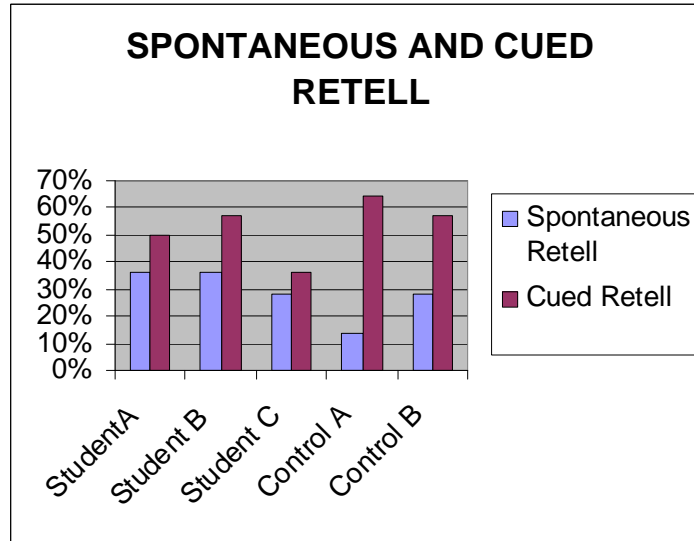
Spontaneous and Cued Retell: Individual Students

	STUDENT A		STUDENT B		STUDENT C	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-test	Post-Test
SPONTANEOUS RETELL	36%	43%	36%	43%	28.5%	43%
CUED RETELL	50%	78%	57%	78%	36%	71%

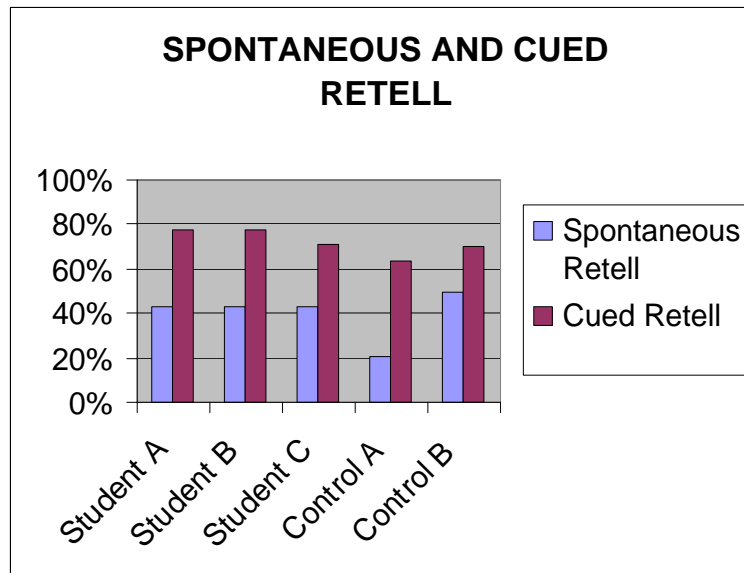
	CONTROL A		CONTROL B	
	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test
SPONTANEOUS RETELL	14%	21%	28%	50%
CUED RETELL	64%	64%	57%	70%

The graphs below compare the Pre Test percentages for the Spontaneous and Cued Retell of the students who were part of the study.

PRE-TEST



POST-TEST



SYNONYM TASK

The Synonym Test group trends showed significant improvements in the intervention group. Student C showed the greatest improvement, while students A & B were similar in their improvement. The control group showed little or no improvement.

Control A showed some improvement, while Control B scored lower in the Post- Test than the Pre-Test. The significant improvement of the control group would seem to have a link to their improvement in the Cued Retell and thus support the prediction of this study. The words on the Synonym Task were not taught to the participants.

Group Trends: Synonym Task

	INTERVENTION GROUP		CONTROL GROUP	
	Pre Test Mean Scores &%	Post Test Mean Scores & %	Pre Test Mean Scores & %	Post Test Mean Scores & %
SYNONYM TASK	16/29 54%	21/29 72%	12.5/29 43%	12.5/29 43%

Synonym Task: Individual Results

	STUDENT A		STUDENT B		STUDENT C	
	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test
SYNONYM TASK	17/29	22/29	17/29	20/29	14/29	21/29

	CONTROL A		CONTROL B	
	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test
SYNONYM TASK	10/29	12/29	15/29	13/29

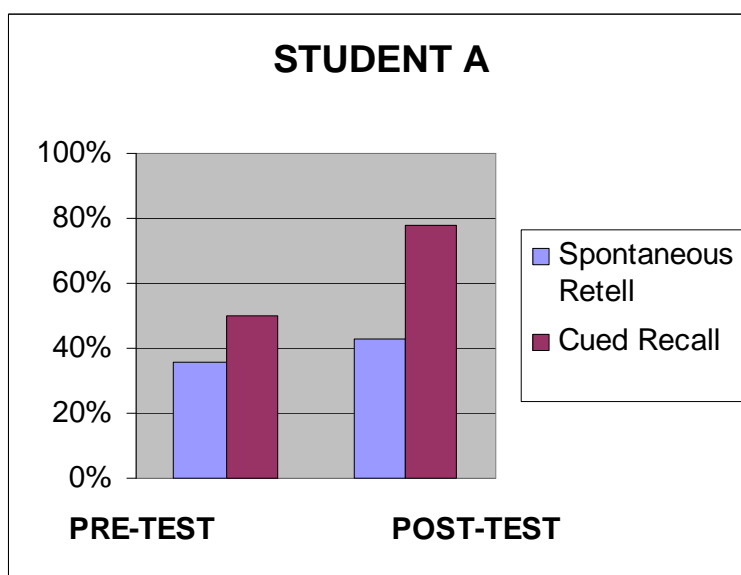
Individual Student Results:

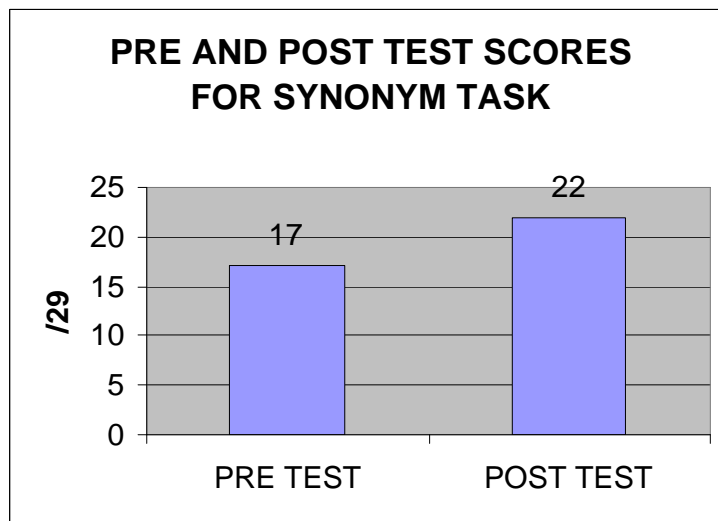
In the Pre test student A recalled 36% of the main ideas in the spontaneous retell and a further 14% in the cued retell. This student did not refer to the text at all when doing the spontaneous retell, but read parts of sentences when doing the cued retell. In the Post-Test Student A showed an improvement in both the spontaneous and Cued Retell in the Post Test. Student A recalled 43% of the main ideas in the Spontaneous

Retell and a further 35% in the Cued Retell. Student A did make some attempt to refer to the text initially while giving the Spontaneous Retell but did not refer to the text at all during the Cued Retell.

Student A scored 17/29 in the Synonym Task in the Pre-Test and 22/29 in the Post Test. This student showed a growing confidence during the teaching sessions in the ability to work with synonyms. He seemed to draw on his vocabulary bank when working with single words, he particularly seem to be able to link synonyms if there was a visual action when finding synonyms for verbs. This student would support the prediction of this study in that he improved in his ability to retell the events of the story and his ability to give synonyms for a set of words also improved.

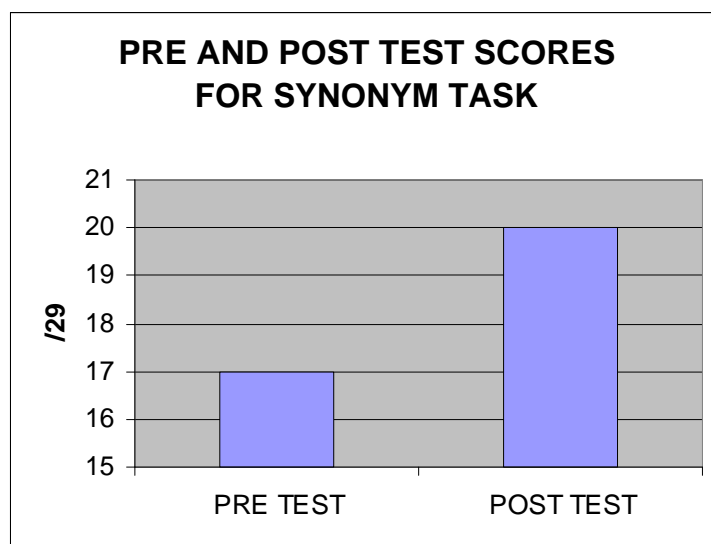
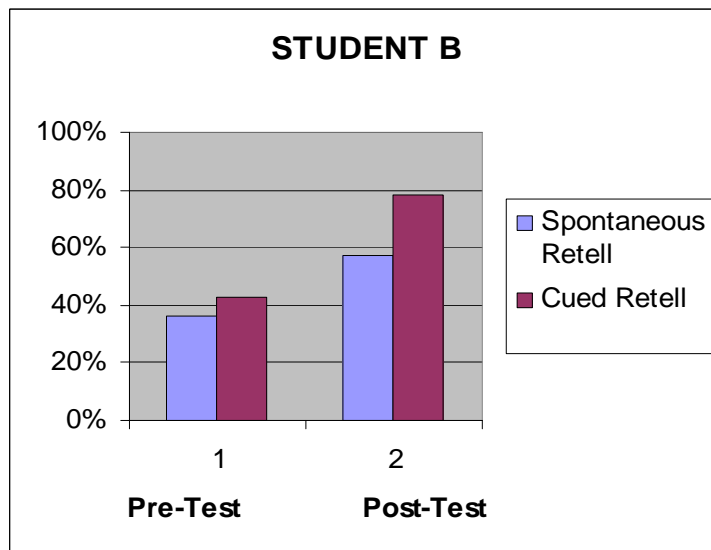
The following graphs show scores for the Pre and Post Tests in the Spontaneous and Cued Recall and The Synonym Task for Student A





In the Pre test Student B recalled 36% of the main ideas in the spontaneous retell and a further 21% in the Cued retell. This student tended to give a lot of minor details in the spontaneous retell but was unable to give the main ideas of the text, he performed much better when undertaking the cued retell. This student's retell showed he remembered a lot of the vocabulary but found it difficult to retell the story in a meaningful manner. Student B improved in both the Spontaneous and Cued Recall in the Post-Test. He recalled 43% in the Spontaneous Retell and a further 35% in the Cued Retell. Once again he gave a lot of minor details, but seemed to be give more main ideas than in the Pre-Test. This student scored 17/29 for the Synonym Task in the Pre-Test and 20/29 in the Post Test. This student showed the least improvement in the Synonym Task. Student B has an ESL background and his work in the teaching sessions would indicate he remembers lots of vocabulary but has limited understanding. He often gave synonyms which did not fit grammatically and in matching games chose words which visually looked similar rather than thinking about their meaning. During the teaching sessions this student contributed answers but often his responses indicated that he did not have understanding of the vocabulary being discussed.

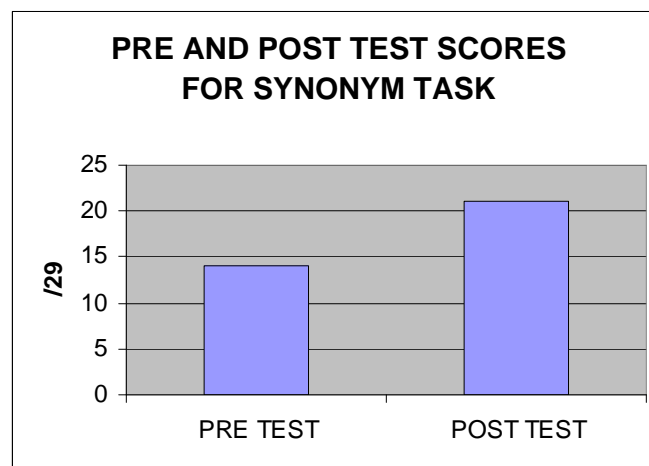
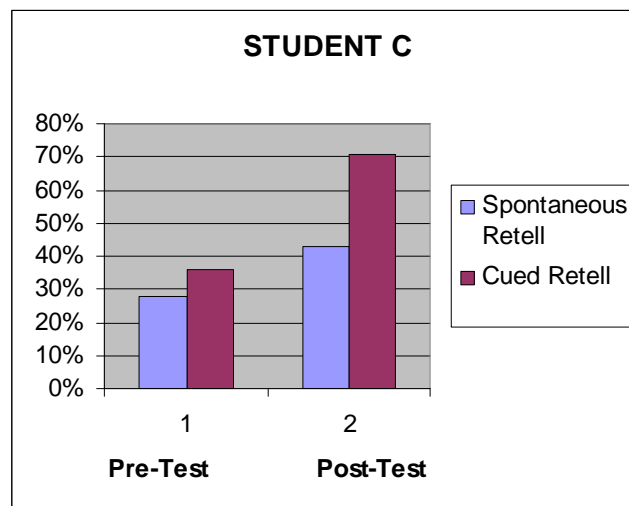
The following graphs show scores for the Pre and Post Tests in the Spontaneous and Cued Recall and The Synonym Task for Student B



Student C recalled 28.5% of the main ideas in the Spontaneous retell and a further 7.5% in the cued retell. This student was able to recall the least number of main ideas of the group. She made only small gains with the cued retell, unlike the other students. This student seemed very hesitant and unsure of answers that were given and seemed to have gained little or no understanding towards the end of the text. This student showed the greatest improvement in the Post-Test. Student C recalled 43% of the main ideas in the Spontaneous Retell and a further 28% in the Cued Retell. She seemed less hesitant and unlike the Pre-test gave a response for each of the questions in the Cued-Retell. Student C scored 14/29 for the Synonym Task in the Pre-Test and 21/29 in the Post Test. During the teaching sessions this student was very quiet, but was always attentive. This student slowly gained confidence and developed a rapport

with me. Student C has shown the strongest evidence to support the prediction of this study.

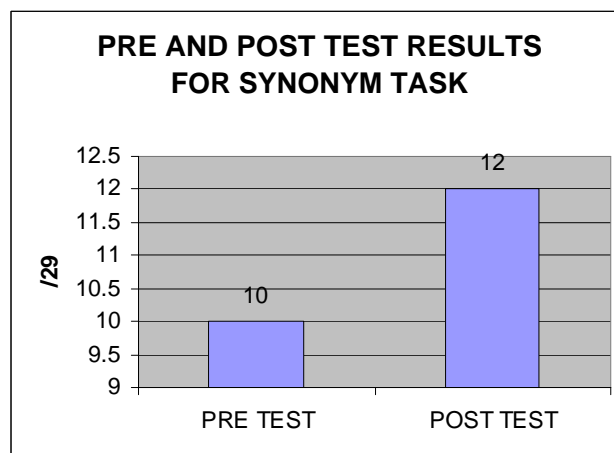
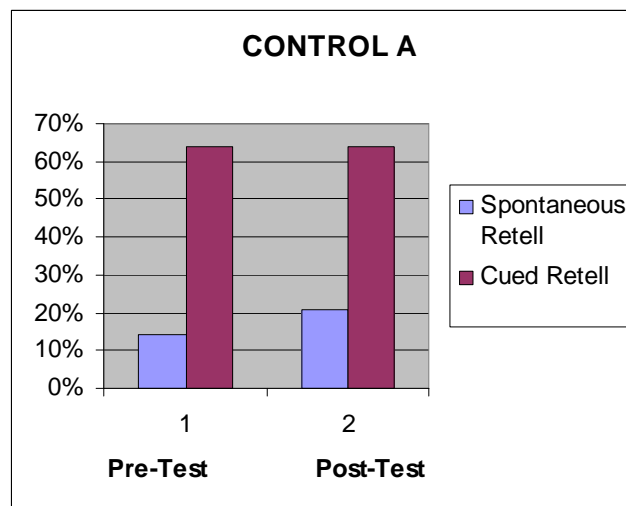
The following graphs show scores for the Pre and Post Tests in the Spontaneous and Cued Recall and The Synonym Task for Student C



In the Pre Test Control A recalled 14% of the main ideas and a further 50% in the cued retell. These results would seem to indicate that this student does have understanding of the text but was unable to order it without the direction of the cued Retell questions. In the Post Test this student improved in Spontaneous Retell but achieved the same score in the Cued Retell. Control A recalled 21% of the main ideas in the Post Test and a further 43% in the Cued Retell. This student scored 10/29 for the Synonym Task in the Pre-Test and 12/29 in the Post Test. Although the results of this student do not support the prediction of this study her overall score on the

Retell(64%) did not change in the Post Test and her score on the Synonym Task in the Post Test was significantly lower than the intervention group.

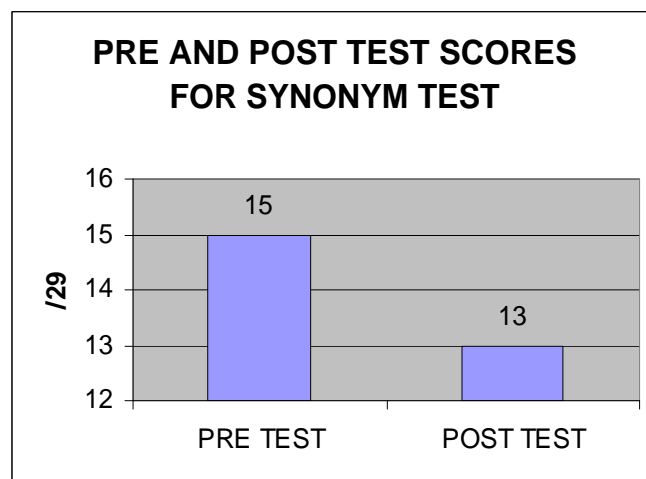
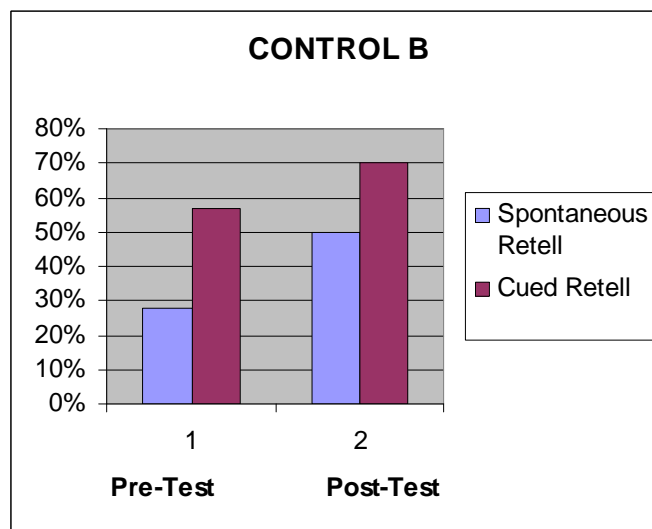
The following graphs show scores for the Pre and Post Tests in the Spontaneous and Cued Recall and The Synonym Task for Control A



In the Pre Test Control B recalled 28% of the main ideas and a further 29% in the cued retell. This student tended recall words and phrases from the text that were not main ideas. In the spontaneous retell the student tended to give details which did not follow the sequence of the story. It would seem that what was recalled did not give evidence of understanding of the text. This student has an ESL background and this could account for the lack of understanding of the text. In the Post Test Control B recalled 50% of the main ideas in the Spontaneous Retell and a further 20% in the Cued Retell. This Student improved in both the Spontaneous and Cued Retell

although not as much as those students who were part of the intervention group. This student scored 15/29 for the Synonym Task in the Pre-Test and 13/29 in the Post Test. This student showed improvement in the Retell but not in the Synonym Task, this does not support the prediction of the study. A point to be considered is that the % further recalled in the Retell was less in the Pre Test (29%) than the Post Test (20%). This student's performance in the classroom tends to be erratic at times and this would seem to be the case with the testing involved with this study.

The following graphs show scores for the Pre and Post Tests in the Spontaneous and Cued Recall and The Synonym Task for Control B



DISCUSSION:

The aim of this study was an attempt at determining whether teaching synonyms to students would improve their literal comprehension. Improvement was assessed by comparing their performance with one another on the pre and post tests, as well as making comparisons with the control group of students who did receive intervention. The results of the synonym task showed that the intervention group out performed the control group. The control group showed no improvement in this task. Both groups improved in both the spontaneous and the cued retell, but the overall percentages that were scored by the intervention group in the post test were greater than that of the control group. The performance of Student C strongly supported the prediction of this study and to a lesser extent Students A & B supported the prediction.

The improvement in the performance of all students in the retell could be attributed to the fact that the same text was used in the pre and post test. The students did remember reading the text. All 3 students in the intervention group improved in the post test in both the spontaneous and cued retell, whereas the control A showed no improvement in the cued retell and the difference between the spontaneous and the cued recall was less in the post test for control B.

During the teaching sessions synonyms were taught in the context of a reading text. The author feels that the children in the intervention group were exposed to a number of comprehending strategies and had opportunities to practise them. At the beginning of each session the group spent time recalling what had been read in the previous session, thus there was practice in the skill of retelling. During the session the participants were required to replace a word in a selected sentence with a synonym. In doing this there were opportunities to paraphrase and visualise. These opportunities could have had some bearing on the results of the Retell post test. Although the participants had opportunity to practise a number of comprehending strategies they did not improve greatly in the spontaneous retell. Greatest improvement was seen in the cued Retell suggesting that the participants did not apply the comprehending strategies without assistance. It would seem for these strategies to become automatic the participants would need constant practice over a period of time.

The synonym task results showed improvement for each of the intervention students. Student C showed the greatest improvement. Control A showed some improvement although not as much as any of the intervention group. Control B gave less correct responses in the post test than the pre test. During the teaching sessions students were encouraged to consider grammar when thinking of synonyms. Students were also encouraged to use synonyms within a text and check for understanding. Student B, improved most, in his ability in considering grammar when giving synonyms.

The author had not previously taught any of the students in the area of literacy but knew the children through specialist classes. The intervention group all displayed a positive attitude to the teaching sessions. Student A often made comments that reading was difficult and often had to be encouraged to have a go. Towards the end of the teaching sessions there was an improvement in the student's willingness to experiment with synonyms. Student B was eager to be a part of the teaching sessions but often gave responses without thought about whether what was said or read made sense. Responses were often grammatically incorrect. This student has an ESL background, which could explain a lack of understanding of word meanings and grammar. Student C was extremely quiet, but attentive and from her results it was evident that she benefited from the intervention.

Improvement in self efficacy could be a reason for these students improving as all 3 students experienced success during the teaching sessions and each of them could verbalise things they had learnt at the end of a teaching session.

Rupley, Logan & Nichols (1999) suggested an interactive vocabulary instruction which encouraged children to discuss, elaborate and demonstrate meanings of new words would improve their overall reading. This approach was taken in the present study and results support the findings of Rupley, Logan & Nichols.

Christen and Murphy (1991) considered the idea of preparing the children to read by integrating new information/vocab with what the learner already knows. Through the teaching sessions it was evident that the students performed better when they could make links to words they already knew. Student B in particular was able to give more appropriate responses when he was prepared or had made links to vocabulary he

already knew. Student A seemed surprised when he was able to give an appropriate synonym. It would seem that this student does not make links between new information and what he already knows until prompted. The activities with synonyms prompted Student B to draw on his vocabulary bank and experience success.

The National Reading Panel (2000) noted that students who showed an interest in words were motivated to learn new words and thus saw a new purpose for reading. The participants of the intervention definitely showed an interest in new words but had not moved on to see a new purpose for reading. This suggests that this process takes time and students need many opportunities to work and play with words to develop that motivation to learn new words through reading.

It is interesting to note that all 5 participants of the study performed poorly in the Sentence Memory for Sentence Task, indicating limited oral language. Munro (2006) suggests that oral language development has implications for a student's ability to comprehend a text. These students all experience difficulties in comprehension and it would seem that work in Oral Language would be beneficial to their learning in the area of literacy.

Confounding variables may have impacted on the results of the study. The teaching sessions were at different times of the day and there was a gap of 3 days between sessions during the course of the program. The author was not the intervention students' classroom teacher and the sessions were done in isolation from the classroom program. The author's background knowledge of the students' learning styles was limited. When considering the results of this study the small size of the sample should be considered.

The students who participated in this study are currently in Year 5. Their poor performance in the Oral Language task and their limited ability to give a spontaneous retell would suggest that more time needs to be given to oral activities in the area of literacy in the early and middle years of primary school. Given the success of a very short and limited teaching program, it would seem that a whole school, long term approach to the development of oral language would be beneficial to students who are endeavouring to build a vocabulary bank and improve their reading comprehension.

Appendix 1:

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 2: Synonym Task

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

Appendix 3: Cued retell

Characteristic of retelling	Ideas in the Story	No. of ideas
Main Characters	Matt, other boys, the galahs, mum	4
Plot of the Story	About finding some dead and injured galahs in the park and deciding what to do with them.	4
Events of the story	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finding the galahs• The other boy deciding to use the dead galahs for yabby bait.• The other boys playing football• Matt taking the injured galah home.• Talking with mum about how to save the galah• Feeding the galah.	6
Total		14

Cued Retelling

1. Who were the main characters of the story?
2. Where did the story take place?
3. What did the boys find?
4. What did Matt decide to do?
5. What did the other boys decide to do?
6. Who did Matt ask for help to look after the bird?

Appendix 4: Teaching Sequence

ACTIVITY	TASK DESCRIPTION	TIME
Clarify Terms	Orally discuss what a synonym is. Write down what a synonym is. Our learning outcome is to identify synonyms by looking at the title of the text and the illustration on the front cover of the book “Stay Calm”	7 mins
Target Words Vocab Building	Look at the front cover. As a group read the title what are other word /synonyms for the title. Write a new title. Make a list of words which describe the characters on the front cover. Think of other words which mean the same. Read the words together.	7 mins
Putting words in a context.	Write the words from above in a sentence. Teacher modelling and then student make a sentence.	7 mins
Manipulating & experimenting with synonyms.	Each student cut up a sentences, put them back together. Read the sentence aloud. Then swap synonyms from their sentence to another student’s sentence. Read the new sentence aloud.	10 mins
Reflective	Ask each child what they have learnt in the session. Give assistance to verbalise their learning if required.	5 mins

ACTIVITY	TASK DESCRIPTION	TIME
Clarifying Terms	<p>Talk about what a synonym is. Give a definition.</p> <p>Revise synonyms given for the title and front cover characters.</p> <p>Learning outcome: To read first 2 pages of text and identify synonyms for target words.</p>	5 mins
Text Reading Target Words	<p>Read the first 2 pages of the text, stopping to identify & discuss synonyms for the target words.</p> <p>Normal, collecting, warm, long, leaped, good, swayed.</p>	10 mins
Synonyms & vocab building	<p>Write target words and match with synonyms. Read words in groups of similar meanings. Orally make up sentences with the words.</p>	10 mins
Manipulate & experiment with synonyms	<p>Students take turns to act out target words. Others guess the word and give a synonym for the word.</p>	5 mins
Reflective	<p>Re read text.</p> <p>Ask each child what they have learnt in the session.</p> <p>Give assistance to verbalise their learning if required.</p>	5 Mins

ACTIVITY	TASK DESCRIPTION	TIME
Clarify Terms	Revise Synonyms from previous session. Retell story so far. Learning outcome: To read next 2 pages of text and identify synonyms for target words.	5 min
Text Reading Target Words	Read the next 2 pages of the text, stopping to identify & discuss synonyms for the target words. Closer, peeked, speaks, strange, urgent, bundled	10 min
Synonyms & vocab building	Orally locate target words in the text and use a synonym to replace the target word. Make flash cards of words and synonyms.	10 min
Manipulate & experiment with synonyms	Play a matching game with target words and their synonyms. Play the game again using words from previous sessions.	5 min
Reflective	Re read text and retell what has been read. Encourage the use of synonyms. Children verbalise what they have learnt in the session.	5 min

ACTIVITY	TASK DESCRIPTION	TIME
Clarify Terms	Revise Synonyms from previous session. Retell story so far. Learning outcome: To read next 2 pages of text and identify synonyms for target words.	5 min
Text Reading Target Words	Read the next 2 pages of the text, stopping to identify & discuss synonyms for the target words. Explanation, experimental, co-operation, anti climax, trudged	10 min
Synonyms & vocab building	Orally locate target words in the text and use a synonym to replace the target word. Make flash cards of words and synonyms.	5 min
Manipulate & experiment with synonyms	Cloze activity with target words. I will include some of the previously used words.	10 min
Reflective	Re read text and retell what has been read. Encourage the use of synonyms. Children verbalise what they have learnt in the session.	5 min

ACTIVITY	TASK DESCRIPTION	TIME
Clarify Terms	Revise Synonyms from previous session. Retell story so far. Learning outcome: To read next 2 pages of text and identify synonyms for target words.	5 min
Text Reading Target Words	Read the next 2 pages of the text, stopping to identify & discuss synonyms for the target words. Wander, staring, creature, monstrous, huge, remembered	10 min
Synonyms & vocab building	Orally locate target words in the text and use a synonym to replace the target word. Make flash cards of words and synonyms.	5 min
Manipulate & experiment with synonyms	Find synonyms for target words by looking through the newspaper	10 min
Reflective	Re read text and retell what has been read. Encourage the use of synonyms. Children verbalise what they have learnt in the session.	5 min

ACTIVITY	TASK DESCRIPTION	TIME
Clarify Terms	Revise Synonyms from previous session. Retell story so far. Learning outcome: To read next 2 pages of text and identify synonyms for target words.	5 min
Text Reading Target Words	Read the next 2 pages of the text, stopping to identify & discuss synonyms for the target words. Screamed, crazy, frantically, nasty, pounding	10 min
Synonyms & vocab building	Each student makes 2 flashcards one with a target word and the other with a matching synonym. Present to group	5 min
Manipulate & experiment with synonyms	Make a group wordfind with the target words and use the synonyms as clues	10 min
Reflective	Re read text and retell what has been read. Encourage the use of synonyms. Children verbalise what they have learnt in the session.	5 min

ACTIVITY	TASK DESCRIPTION	TIME
Clarify Terms	Revise Synonyms from previous session. Retell story so far. Learning outcome: To read next 2 pages of text and identify synonyms for target words.	5 min
Text Reading Target Words	Read the next 2 pages of the text, stopping to identify & discuss synonyms for the target words. Panic, enormous, authorities, scary, though.	10min
Synonyms & vocab building	Match the target words with prepared synonyms.	5 min
Manipulate & experiment with synonyms	Look at all the synonyms we have gathered from the text so far and group them according to meaning. E.g walking words – pounding, trudged. Add any others words known by the students	10 min
Reflective	Re read text and retell what has been read. Encourage the use of synonyms. Children verbalise what they have learnt in the session.	5 min

ACTIVITY	TASK DESCRIPTION	TIME
Clarify Terms	Revise Synonyms from previous session. Retell story so far. Learning outcome: To read next 2 pages of text and identify synonyms for target words.	5 min
Text Reading Target Words	Read the next 2 pages of the text, stopping to identify & discuss synonyms for the target words. Count on, sensible, burst, slither, good	10 min
Synonyms & vocab building	Continue matching game with all the synonyms and target words can we add other words to any of the target words	5 min
Manipulate & experiment with synonyms	Write target words in a sentence.	10 min
Reflective	Re read text and retell what has been read. Encourage the use of synonyms. Children verbalise what they have learnt in the session.	5 min

ACTIVITY	TASK DESCRIPTION	TIME
Clarify Terms	Revise Synonyms from previous session. Retell story so far. Learning outcome: To read next 2 pages of text and identify synonyms for target words.	5 min
Text Reading Target Words	Read the next 2 pages of the text, stopping to identify & discuss synonyms for the target words. Fortunately, raced, surprised, complete, slammed, boring	10 min
Synonyms & vocab building	Give oral sentences for each of the target words.	5 min
Manipulate & experiment with synonyms	Use a newspaper to find synonyms for the target words.	10 min
Reflective	Re read text and retell what has been read. Encourage the use of synonyms. Children verbalise what they have learnt in the session.	5 min

ACTIVITY	TASK DESCRIPTION	TIME
Clarify Terms	Revise Synonyms from previous session. Retell story so far. Learning outcome: Complete text and identify synonyms for target words.	5 min
Text Reading Target Words	Read the last 2 pages of the text, stopping to identify & discuss synonyms for the target words. Great, walk, crash, courage, guess	10 min
Synonyms & vocab building	Discuss if we already have some synonyms for the target words Refer to groups of words made E.g. Walking words, speaking words.	5 min
Manipulate & experiment with synonyms	Build on groups of words that have similar meanings. Read the words together. Play “What word am I?”	10 min
Reflective	Re read text and retell what has been read. Encourage the use of synonyms. Children verbalise what they have learnt in the session.	5 min

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