

Teaching students who have difficulty comprehending written text synonyms and to paraphrase, will assist them to comprehend what they are reading and enable them to successfully retell a given text.

Procedure

Session 1:- Think of a synonym for a given word. Create a word bank. Play word games using the synonyms, Bingo, Concentration, Fish.

Session 2:- Revise the definition of a synonym, play the games created in the previous session. Move onto the introduction of using synonyms in sentence work. A sentence is written on the board and the verb is underlined. A list is then compiled on the board of synonyms for that verb, words that have the same meaning. The teacher models the retell of the sentence using the selected words from the list ensuring that the meaning of the sentence remains. Each student has a turn.

Session 3:- Recall what happened in the previous session, replacing the verb with a synonym. Using the same sentence the students are asked to retell the sentence changing as many words as possible. These sentences are transcribed on the board. Discussion takes place as to which sentences have retained the meaning of the original sentence. The students then record their sentence.

Session 4:- Introduce a new sentence. Ask the students what picture they see after reading that sentence. Transcribe their responses on the board. The teacher models the retelling of the sentence using as many synonyms as possible. Students retell and write their own sentences. Discussion on what we do when reading. Introduce the verbalization of what we do when we read, read the sentence, picture it, cover the sentence and retell it in my own words. Repeat the process using a second sentence.

Session 5:- Using a fictional text and verbalizing the strategy before reading, the students read a sentence, picture it, cover the sentence and retell it in their own words changing as many words as possible.

Session 6, 7, 8, 9:- Reading both fictional and non-fictional texts and verbalising the strategy before reading, the students read the text a sentence at a time and paraphrase it. At the end of each paragraph discuss what the main idea is.

Session 10:- A shared wall story. A short story was read to the group. Working individually, the students were given several sequential paragraphs to read. Their task was then to use the paraphrasing strategy to create an illustrated wall story to be shared at the completion of the session. Before commencing to read they verbalised the strategy and this was repeated at the beginning of each new paragraph. Before sharing the completed wall story the main ideas of the story were discussed. The story was read and the students evaluated their work focusing on whether the initial meaning was retained.

Appendix 1: Synonyms Task

- Students are given a word
- Asked, 'Do you know another word that means the same as
- Responses are recorded.
- Students complete a practice exercise first.
- Target words are :- small, fast, old, leave, car, shoe, child, fat, walk, cat, fatigued, boat, clean, sick, tiger, engine, ignore, precious, angry, hit, give, stop, cage, adolescent, station, release, flow, liberate, a building.

Total – 29 words

Appendix 2: Paraphrasing Tasks

Pre Test :- Sentence memory for Sentences Task, John Munro.

- Each sentence is read to the student.
- Student is asked to 'Retell the sentence in your own words.'
'Make sure the sentence meaning is retained.'
- Students' response is recorded.
- Sentences are :- They eat pumpkin
The rabbit did not run
They ate the fresh bread from the bakers' shop after they bought the paper.
In the bus he could see his friend.
The woman watched the basketball match and the girl ate a pie.
The family used their red beach umbrella to avoid the intense sunlight.
The lizard drank the water, the rabbit scratched itself and the boy blew bubbles.
Heavy fog caused several accidents on the highway.
If David walks around the lake he will see the three pink ducks.
The puppies in the box are warm.
It took the younger boys more than ten minutes to eat the apple pie.
In the autumn they often enjoy long bike rides through the park.
She was there with the boats on the river and the dog was under the tree.
Late every afternoon Jack wanted to swim with Ann at the beach.
They were excited about the photos and waited at the corner.
When Jill kicks the ball she drops it quickly onto her left foot.
Before they went into the shop the car tooted its horn loudly.

As it was cold they decided to move to the other room upstairs.
The class was told to do examples 4 to 7 on page 14 of their word book.
Jean will paint her doll's house red if she can find yellow flowers.
Reading is fun as long as the story is interesting and has at least three pictures in each chapter.

Total - 21 sentences.

Post Test:- Record of Oral language – Alternative Levelled Sentences
(Sentences taken from: Level 1 Part 2, Level 2 Part 2, Level 3 Part 2)

- Each sentence is read to the student.
- Student is asked to 'Retell the sentence in their own words.'
'Make sure the sentence meaning is retained.'
- Students' response is recorded.
- Sentences are:- My brother's television is noisy.
Mummy is pushing her pram.
David is going to soccer.
Sally is making me a cake.
I know she's here.
There are some other toys.
She's riding her skateboard very fast.
The old bike in here used to be my sister's.
The boy over there was calling the dog.
The cat went under the chair in the house.
For the wedding Aunty gave us a vase.
The lady heard what the man was saying to the boy.
Here is my sister driving in her motorcar.
The boy hit the ball far across the field.
Be very careful diving where there's a deep pool.
That man and the one over there like to read the paper.
Some of the people spoke quickly to each other at the football.
The old teacher told his class a funny story.
The mother knows how much milk we need for the cake.
There goes the policeman who caught out the thief at the bakery.
My sister usually puts some meat outside for the dog.

Total – 21 sentences.

Appendix 3: Teaching Unit

Teaching students who have difficulty comprehending written text synonyms and to paraphrase, will assist them to comprehend what they are reading and enable them to successfully retell a given text.

The three students involved in this research were from the middle years of the primary school. All three boys were in Year 4 and were taken as a withdrawal group within their class literacy sessions. During this time they are usually working in a literacy support group with six other students also in Year 4. The three students in the control group were also members of this support group. Each intervention session was for thirty to forty five minutes.

This research links into the MLOTP model at sentence level comprehension with a topic level of recognising the main ideas in a paragraph.

Session 1

- * Group given a word, each asked to provide a word that means the same – synonym
- * Repeat the step several times, compiling a word bank.
- * Discuss what these words are called synonyms and what a synonym is (a word that means the same as another word)
- * Students record the definition in their work books as well as recording several of the words and their synonyms e.g. pretty – beautiful, lawn – grass, hungry – starving, mad - angry
- * Words in the word bank are placed onto card and used in word games – Bingo and Concentration

Session 2

- * Commence the session by playing the card games introduced last session.
- * Revise the definition of a synonym
- * Add any synonyms that the students have thought of since the session to the word bank.
- * Teacher writes a sentence on the board. e.g. ‘Peter and Sam went down the street.’ Replace the verb ‘went. Each student has a turn and these words are listed on the board.
- * Teacher models paraphrasing the whole sentence orally.
- * Each student then has a turn of paraphrasing the sentence, these are recorded on the board. Discuss which sentence / sentences have the same meaning as the original.
- * Ask the children what other words in the sentence can be replaced using a synonym. When all students have had their turn, discuss which sentence has the most words changed. Decide which sentence / sentences have the same meaning as the original.

Session 3

- * Using the sentence, 'Sally and Jane went to the doctors because they were sick.' Repeat the steps outlined in the last session.
- * Discuss the procedure followed for each sentence:-
 - read the sentence
 - what do you think it means
 - how could you say this in your own words
 - highlight the main topic words in the sentence
 - what other words could you use that still mean the same (use a thesaurus if the students are having difficulty)
 - these words are called synonyms
 - retell your sentence in your own words
- * Inform the students that this procedure is called paraphrasing. Have the procedure written out on a chart to display in the room.
- * Each student is then given a sentence strip and asked to follow the outlined procedure to paraphrase their sentence.
- * Share and discuss their individual sentences.

Session 4

- * Introduce a new sentence. Ask the students to 'picture it in their head'. Discuss what they see. Then get them to follow the procedure outlined on the chart from last session. Share their sentences, encouraging them to cover their sentence before they retell it.
- * Introduce the verbalization of the procedure followed when we read -
 - read the sentence
 - picture it in your mind
 - cover the sentence
 - retell it in your own words
- * Model the above procedure using a second sentence.
- * Give each student a sentence strip, give them time to rehearse the procedure.
- * Share their sentences.

Session 5

- * Revise the verbalization of the procedure outlined in the previous session.
- * Introduce a fictional text, "Daniel's Dinosaurs" by Mary Carmine (Scholastic 1990)
- * Verbalising the strategy before reading, the students read the sentence, picture it, cover the sentence and retell it in their own words.
- * At the end of each paragraph, discuss what the main ideas are, retell the paragraph in their own words.

Sessions 6, 7, 8, 9

- * Following the procedure set in the last session, making sure that the students verbalise the strategy before they implement it.
- * Have the students working with fictional and non-fictional texts.
- * The students read the text one sentence at a time and then paraphrase it. At the end of each paragraph discuss the main ideas of that paragraph.

Session 10

- * A Shared Wall Story – “The Lonely Giant”, by Lucy Lawrence & Craig Smith. (Literacy Links, Mimosa. 1993)
- * The story is read to the group.
- * Each student is given two sequential paragraphs to read.
- * Working individually, their task is to use the paraphrase strategy to create an illustrated wall story to be shared at the completion of the session. (one sheet of paper for each paragraph).
- * Students must verbalise the strategy before working on each sentence / paragraph.
- * Before sharing the completed wall story, discuss as a group the main ideas of the story.
- * Read the completed Wall Story.
- * As a group, evaluate their story focusing on whether the initial meaning is retained.

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