

The explicit teaching of synonyms and then paraphrasing will improve the literal comprehension of Year 2 students.

Procedure

The first session introduced the students to the term synonyms. They were asked if they heard of the word or knew what it meant. As a group we then looked up the definition in the dictionary and came up with a common understanding of what are synonyms. They were then asked to suggest synonyms for big and bright and discussed whether their response fitted with our definition, why and why not.

Sessions two and three revisited what synonyms are and also focused on where we find synonyms and using synonyms in a sentence. Students were also required to use a thesaurus during these sessions for assistance.

Sessions four to six continued to recap the meaning of synonyms and being able to suggest accurate synonyms for words in texts. These sessions also introduced the concept of paraphrasing and how synonyms can help us to recall the main ideas in our own words.

Sessions seven to ten began with short activities/games involving synonyms. These sessions built on what they now knew about paraphrasing and asked them to put it into practice. Session seven and nine required a lot of modelling by the teacher. During session eight, students were introduced to the paraphrasing strategy RAP – Read a paragraph, Ask yourself, “What are the main ideas and details, and Put into you own words (Schumaker, Denton & Deshler, 1984). This strategy was continued in sessions nine and ten. For a more detailed account of these sessions please refer to the Appendix – Lesson Plans.

APPENDIX – Lesson Plans

These lessons have been designed to use with Year 2 students with a high reading accuracy for their age but poor comprehension. They should be conducted with small groups of children for approximately 20 minutes at a time.

Lesson Plan One

	Description	Approximate Time
Focus	Synonyms – What are synonyms?	
Introduction	What are synonyms? Record definition	3-5mins
Activity	Can you think of synonyms for BIG, BRIGHT? Record list of synonyms. Discuss children's responses. Explain why any incorrect responses aren't a synonym. Eg. May be an opposites, tenses etc.	7-10mins
Plenary	When could you use synonyms?	2mins

Lesson Plan Two

	Description	Approximate Time
Focus	Synonyms – Where can we find Synonyms?	
Introduction	Revisit definition from session 1. Ask "Where can we find Synonyms?" Introduce a thesaurus. How does a thesaurus work? Let each student look through a thesaurus. Discuss how the word in a sentence helps us to know which synonym to choose.	5-10mins
Activity	Read selected text to students. Choose a word from the text to look up in the thesaurus. Decide which words are appropriate synonyms and list. Re-read sentence using the different synonyms. Does the sentence/story still make sense?	5-8mins
Plenary	Discuss synonyms for tired, hungry and happy. Students to practise at home using synonyms for tired, hungry and happy and see if anyone at home notices. Students then to discuss what a synonym is with someone at home.	5mins

Lesson Plan Three

	Description	Approximate Time
Focus	Synonyms – Using synonyms in a sentence,	
Introduction	Revisit definition of synonym. Discuss what synonyms students tried at home. Did they try any others words and their synonyms? What can we use to help find synonyms for words?	4mins
Activity	Read short sentences to students. Ask them to think of alternative words to use in sentences. Record responses. Re-read sentences with listed synonyms. Look words up in the thesaurus. Try using synonyms from the thesaurus in the sentences. Which would be the best replacement?	5-10mins
Plenary	What are some new 'words' (synonyms) are you going to use when talking and in your writing?	2mins

Lesson Plan Four

	Description	Approximate Time
Focus	Synonyms and Paraphrasing – What is paraphrasing?	
Introduction	What is paraphrasing? What might it mean? Write definition together to establish a common meaning for group. Why would paraphrasing be useful when reading?	5mins
Activity	Read sentences from a chosen text to students. Ask them to repeat in their own words? What were they doing while they were listening to the sentences? Where they thinking of the meaning of the sentence? Could they identify alternative words help them remember or interpret the sentence?	10mins
Plenary	How might synonyms help us to paraphrase? Record response.	4mins

Lesson Plan Five

	Description	Approximate Time
Focus	Synonyms and Paraphrasing – How do synonyms help with paraphrasing?	
Introduction	Revisit/explain how synonyms can help students to paraphrase. Establish that students still have a clear understanding of what <u>synonyms and paraphrasing</u> are.	4mins
Activity	Read short story or paragraph from selected text to students. Discuss possible synonyms that could be used to keep the meaning. Record these. Test suggestions. Re-read random sentences and ask student individually to paraphrase verbally.	10mins
Plenary	How might paraphrasing help you with your reading? Ask students to reflect on this question. They may have suggestions so record these.	2mins

Lesson Plan Six

	Description	Approximate Time
Focus	Synonyms and Paraphrasing – How will paraphrase help when reading?	
Introduction	Revisit the question - How might paraphrasing help you with your reading? When would we use paraphrasing as a strategy?	4mins
Activity	Read short story or paragraph from selected text to students. Ask students to think of synonyms in their head, picture story taking place. Re-read a sentence. Ask them to paraphrase this sentence. Record synonyms used. What other synonyms could be used? Are they the best options?	10-15mins
Plenary	What strategies did you use while you were listening to the story/paragraph/sentence? Record responses	3mins

Lesson Plan Seven

	Description	Approx. Time
Focus	Paraphrasing – What does paraphrasing help us do?	
Introduction	Revisit synonyms. Play Synonyms Memory Game. Students match cards with the same meanings. Read short sentences to students and they fill in the gaps with an appropriate synonym for the word in brackets.	8mins
Activity	Read short story or paragraph from selected text to students. Modelled writing alternative words then re-reading to check meaning is maintained. Ask students to continue through text and at the end of each sentence ask students to paraphrase. Discuss how it helps us to remember what the author is telling us. Why is it important for us to understand what the author is telling us? Discuss how the author is giving us a message through the text. Share passages completed independently.	10mins
Plenary	What strategies did you use to help you in this session? How do you feel about your reading? Has this session helped you? Record students' responses.	3mins

Lesson Plan Eight, Nine & Ten

	Description	Approx. Time
Focus	Paraphrasing – How does paraphrasing help with comprehension?	
Introduction	Revisit synonyms. Play 'Yes/No' game where teacher reads two words and the students hold up yes or no if the words have a similar meaning. Students complete a matching sheet where they draw lines between words that have similar meanings.	5mins
Activity	Introduce RAP – Read the paragraph, Ask yourself "What are the main ideas/details?", and Put into your own words. Have displayed on a poster for reference. Read short story or paragraph from selected text to students. Underline, using highlighters, main/ key ideas in the text. Suggest possible synonyms. Modelling writing a paraphrased sentence. At the end of each sentence ask students to paraphrase independently writing their suggestions then sharing and discuss.	10mins
Plenary	What strategies did you use to help you in this session? How do you feel about your reading? How has this session helped you? Record students' responses.	3mins

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