

Explicit strategic instruction in paraphrasing with a particular focus on the use of synonyms will improve comprehension.

Teaching Materials

Materials used include the following:

- How to chunk/segment sheet (John Munro)
- Chapter form Paul Jennings, 'Uncanny'- 'Spaghetti Pig-Out'- words from chapter used to introduce synonyms.
- Texts from Rigby Collections – used in teaching sessions to facilitate development of students' comprehension through the strategy of paraphrasing.
- Teaching Paraphrasing Strategy flow chart – (John Munro)
- Classroom materials – flashcards, whiteboard, chart paper, textas, student reflective journals, thesaurus.

Procedure

Students were withdrawn from the classroom for the administration of the pre and post testing. Upon the collation and analysis of the pre-test information, students were withdrawn from their class to work together for approximately 45 minutes per session. These occurred mainly during the class' literacy time or another time negotiated by the students. The intervention ran over a period of four weeks and totaled 12 sessions.

From the information gained about the students, it was evident that before commencing the paraphrasing strategy, it was necessary to provide explicit teaching on the components contained within the strategy. An important factor within this research was making students think in ways they haven't thought before and to learn new actions more effectively. As such, for the sequence of lessons to be effective, it was of vital importance to prepare the students adequately for what they needed to learn. By providing understanding and knowledge of the key components, it enabled students to build on their existing knowledge as well as experience success.

Prior to the teaching of the paraphrasing strategy, it was necessary to provide these students with a purpose for the comprehension instruction. The first session began with discussing the importance and purpose of reading and the skills good readers demonstrate. These ideas were listed on a chart and displayed and participants were encouraged to add and refer to this at any point during the sessions. A questioning chart was also developed by the group that was referred to as prompts effective readers used to formulate questions when reading a text (eg: Who were... Where did...). This was also prominently displayed and was added to as the sessions commenced. These charts assisted in supporting the students in developing their metacognition.

(Appendix 1)

The second session began with determining a group definition for synonyms. This was explicitly taught by reading a chapter from Paul Jennings' book, 'Spaghetti Pig Out' and extracting unknown or unfamiliar words. Participants collectively provided various synonyms for these words and these were placed on flashcards and were used to play bingo, concentration or synonym races. This not only engaged the students but assisted in consolidating their understanding of synonyms as well as exposing them to richer vocabulary.

The third session focused on how to paraphrase by teaching the students how to think 'paraphrasing'. This was also explicitly taught to students utilising simple sentences and asking them to rephrase the sentence by changing as many words as possible without losing meaning. The key actions involved here was to assist students to identify the topic of the text, segment or chunk sentences into key ideas, suggest synonyms, link these synonyms into a proposition or relationship and finally, to check that the new sentence retained the same meaning as the initial sentence. Teaching the students how to segment or chunk a sentence into parts assisted them to recognise the meaningful units in which to re-word sentences. This was modeled to the group with sentences on the board from 'Spaghetti Pig-Out', before students worked in pairs to practice. Students then reinforced their understanding by completing a prepared on 'The Giant Panda' in which the left hand column contained the original sentence and they were required to match paraphrased sentences from the right hand column which were not in correct order. **(Appendix 4)** The purpose of this task was twofold; to monitor their ability to chunk and segment sentences and to determine their ability to correctly match the paraphrased sentence.

Once this was established, students in the following session were provided with a worksheet with various sentences. Their task was to work in pairs to reinforce their understanding of chunking and segmenting sentences and then to paraphrase each, changing as many words as possible without changing the meaning. **(Appendix 5)** A combination of one and two event sentences was included on this sheet.

Throughout all these lessons that were explicitly taught, oral language was a strong component. Students were constantly required to verbalise the process, their thinking and share their thoughts and ideas. They were encouraged to provide feedback on each other's paraphrased sentence and justify their reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with answers which determined the accuracy of their paraphrasing. At the conclusion of each of these lessons, students reflected on their learning in their journal and set personal goals for themselves for the next session.

The next session began with the explicit instruction of 'what', 'why' and 'how' of the paraphrasing strategy. The mnemonic, RAP was introduced. **(Appendix 6)** This was modeled using various sentences from texts in the Rigby Collection, before students practiced in pairs, then individually. Each session concluded with the students orally

reviewing the action taken therefore, developing a self script and then individually reflecting on their own learning in their journal.

The following sessions required the students to consolidate the use of the strategy, reviewing the steps involved in paraphrasing (RAP) and practicing the strategy through verbalisation. The definition for synonyms and how to chunk/segment sentences was continually reinforced prior to each lesson. This framework was used for paraphrasing sentences before graduating to paragraphs. Students were given the opportunity to work in pairs to implement the strategy in order to establish their understanding and the use of it. The sessions reinforced their use of oral language where students were encouraged to verbalise and practice the strategy, suggest synonyms for key content words, paraphrase a sentence listened to, question, make suggestions, provide feedback to each other, review the lesson and reflect on their learning. Appropriate feedback and support was provided and student action was monitored.

The remaining 7 sessions proceeded in the following manner:

- Review previous day's session
- Text retelling from previous session
- Getting Knowledge Ready (**GKR**) to orientate students to new text-Text reading
- Synonyms- Reading target words from new text. Teacher reads and students match orally with synonyms. Add suggestions to flashcards for games.
- Reading of new text
- Modeling of paraphrasing a sentence as a group from the text using the RAP strategy. Teacher writes, students provide suggestions orally
- Applying the RAP strategy - Writing new sentences in pairs, then individually
- Review and feedback to each other. Oral comprehension and retelling of text.
- Metacognition (orally)–What actions were used? What did I learn? When can I use it? How does putting sentences in my own words help me to understand what I have read?
- Reflecting on their own learning in journals.

At the conclusion of each session, student behaviours and progress was monitored in order to evaluate teaching effectiveness and to assist with planning for subsequent lessons.

Teaching Sequence

- Sequence of lessons designed for small group instruction.
- 7 sequential lessons following pre-test. Post-test was administered at the conclusion of the teaching sequence.
- Students were withdrawn to work in small group situation for a duration of 45 minutes approximately.

Lesson 1- Procedure

1. Explicitly introduce the purpose of the session- *'Today we are going to think about some of the things/strategies good readers use when they are reading.'*
2. Teacher asks students to brainstorm *'What makes a good reader?'* Discuss suggestions offered and ask students to elaborate their ideas and list on a chart.
3. Follow the same procedure with the questions: *'Why is reading important?'* and *'What might be some questions readers ask themselves as they are reading?'* Discuss and list all suggestions on a chart. Explain to the students that these charts will assist us during the following sessions and that they can add to it at any point if they think of any new ideas.
4. Teacher introduces the Reflective Journal and provides each student with an individual copy that has been made into a booklet.
5. Teacher explains to the students that the purpose of the journal is for their own self reflection after each session. It will be used to help them to identify what they have learnt in each session, something they may still be wondering about, what they are proud of, what they are still unsure about, when they can next use what they have learnt.

Lesson 2- Procedure

1. Teacher says, *'Today I am going to read you a story called 'Spaghetti Pig-Out' from Paul Jennings book, 'Uncanny'. I will read you part of the story today and finish the rest in our next sessions'*.
2. *'On the board, I have listed some words that are from the story.'*
(stash, terrible, collapsed, revenge, hesitated, queue, shame)
3. Ask the students to listen for the words in the story. As the sentence is read that contains the word, stop and ask the students what they think the word means. *'Is there another word that could be used that means the same?'*
4. As students suggest words, list on flashcards along with the words from the story. (stash- hide terrible- awful collapsed- fell over)
5. Ask students if they know what we call words that are different but mean the same?
6. Introduce the word synonym.
7. Students are then asked to provide a group definition for 'synonym'.
'Synonyms are words that are the same or similar in meaning'.
8. Write student's definition on a chart and display for reference during sessions.
9. Explain to students that these words will be used to play bingo in the next session.
10. Students reflect in their journals before returning to their classroom.

Lesson 3

1. Review previous day's session. *What did we learn yesterday? What do we call words that mean the same as another? Ask students to retell events from the story yesterday. Continue to read the story.*

2. Provide more words from the Paul Jennings' story, 'Spaghetti Pig Out'. Ask students to provide synonyms. List suggestions on flashcards.
Hungry, nervous, reverse, enormous, shrieked, pressed

Play bingo with synonyms on flashcards.

3. To teach the students how to 'think paraphrasing', provide students with a simple sentence. Ask them, *'Can you say this sentence another way by changing as many words as you can?'*

4. Model with an example on the board-
The goose chatted with her neighbours all day long.

5. Ask students to identify the topic of the sentence.

6. Model how to segment/chunk sentences into key ideas using the number of events in the sentence and the grammar to assist with this.

The goose **chatted with her neighbours** **all day long.**

7. Tell the students that segmenting/chunking helps them to reword the sentence.

8. Once the sentence has been segmented, ask students to provide synonyms that match with each segment while still retaining the meaning.

9. List all possible answers on the board. As a group, decide which suggestion best suits the original sentence.

10. Allow students then to practice in pairs, using sentences from Paul Jennings.

11. Tell them to segment/chunk the sentence into key ideas. Next provide synonyms, then check that the new sentence has maintained meaning. Compare answers and allow students to provide feedback to each other as to the suitability of the paraphrased sentences.

12. To reinforce segmenting and paraphrasing, provide students with a worksheet titled 'The Giant Panda'. Ask students to match the paraphrased sentence with the original sentence. Students are to work individually before sharing as a group. (Appendix 4)

13. Students reflect in their journals.

Lesson 4

1. Review previous day's session.

What did we learn yesterday?

What were the main points to remember?

What strategies did you learn/use?

2. Reinforce how to segment sentences using the worksheet provided.

(Appendix 5) Allow students to work in pairs and then share answers.

3. After students have segmented sentences, ask them to say the sentence another way by using synonyms. Remind students to maintain the meaning of the sentence.

4. Students complete the first few sentences in pairs, before completing the rest individually.

5. Remind students: after you read the sentence:

a) Ask yourself, 'What is the topic of the sentence?'

b) Segment/chunk sentences into key ideas.

c) Say the sentence another way using synonyms and changing as many words as you can.

d) Remember to check to see that the sentence maintains meaning.

6. Share sentences. Students provide feedback to each other as to the appropriateness of their paraphrased sentence. Justify their answers and choice of synonyms.

7. Students reflect in their journals.

What have I learnt today?

What can I do now that I couldn't do before?

What do I still need to find out?

How has this helped me to understand what I read?

8. Play a game of bingo with synonyms.

Lesson 5

1. Introduce text – ‘Hunger’ Rigby Literacy Collection 12 – Upper Primary p58-59

Before Reading

1. Getting Knowledge Ready (GKR)

What does the title tell you?

What does the picture tell you?

Does it remind you of anything?

2. Topic words – ask students to skim the text and identify any words they may not understand the meaning.

widespread starvation immeasurable hardship peasantry dawdling busied shawl

List these on the board.

3. Read precie – What does this tell you about the text?

Can you visualise the topic?

What questions does this ask in your head?

4. Introduce the strategy. *This strategy helps you to understand what you are reading. One of the things you will be doing is to make a picture in your mind while we read. This is called **RAP**.* Provide the poster that outlines the steps in RAP.

Tell yourself what you have read/ ask questions to yourself about what you have read. You can use our question chart to help you. After you read a sentence, you say it to yourself in your own way. You try and change as many words in the sentence as you can while still maintaining the meaning.

Let’s practice. *Look at the first sentence. Chunk and segment the sentence.*

‘The air felt cold and damp as Eily stirred in the bed as she tried to pull a bit more of the blanket up to her shoulders.’

Ask yourself questions. What are the main ideas? What are the main details?

It was chilly in the bed and Eily tried to keep warm under the blanket.

(Student’s response)

Second sentence

Her little sister Peggy moved against her.

Eily’s sister was sleeping next to her (Student’s response)

Peggy was snoring again. She always did when she had a cold.

Peggy was snoring because the cold she had blocked her nose.

(Student's response)

5. List synonyms used.

6. Provide students with the next sentence to individually paraphrase using the RAP strategy.

The hot ash made a soft glow in the gloom of the cottage.

7. Share. Students decide which sentence is most suitable.

8. Scan the rest of the text for difficult words. List on the board. Use a thesaurus to provide synonyms if needed.

9. Reflect: *How did it help putting sentences in your own words? How can it help you to understand reading better?*

10. Revise the strategy used before students leave.

The strategy we used today is called **RAP**. It tells us to:

***R**ead the sentence

***A**sk yourself... what are the main ideas?

*What are the details?

*What are the topic words?

***P**ut it into your own words- try to change as many words as you can without changing the meaning.

The following lessons were based on texts from Rigby Literacy Collections titled:

- ***Caught in a Tempest***
- ***The Frustrated Thief***

COMPREHENSION – using paraphrasing with synonyms

Activity	Teacher	Student
<p>Review previous day's session.</p> <p>(Except for first 5 sessions)</p>	<p>Teacher asks students, "What did we learn from our last session? What were the main points to remember? What strategies did you use/learn?"</p>	<p>Students articulate previous day's session.</p>
<p>Text retelling Passage from previous session</p>	<p>Re-tell what they remember about the text they read yesterday. Provide key ideas and key synonyms used.</p>	<p>Students articulate the meaning of key words using synonyms and summarise text read in their own words.</p>
<p>Text reading Re-read passage from previous session</p>	<p>Teacher and students re-read passage from previous session. Cue students on the use of paraphrasing during reading. <i>"How could you say it another way?"</i></p>	<p>Each student to read a sentence and retell it in their own words, changing as many words as possible while still maintaining meaning.</p>
<p>Text reading</p> <p>New text.</p> <p>Getting Knowledge Reading</p>	<p>Teacher asks students to paraphrase the title. What could be the topic of the text? What is said in the 'blurb'. What could be some ideas in the text? Ask students to skim the text and identify any unknown words. Can you segment/chunk sentences into key ideas? Change the sentence into your own words using synonyms. Make sure the sentence maintains meaning.</p>	<p>Students read the text together. Discuss the key ideas in the text.</p> <p>After I have read a sentence I will... (use self talk to assist)</p> <p>*Ask myself what are the main ideas and details? * Put the ideas into my own words changing as many words as I can.</p>
<p>Synonyms</p>	<p>Can you suggest synonyms for key words? Teacher list suggestions from students on flashcards to use in games.</p>	<p>Students brainstorm synonyms for key words.</p>
<p>Writing new sentences</p>	<p>Ask students to work in pairs, then individually to paraphrase a sentence and write down their new sentence. Check that your new sentence fits with the earlier sentence. Does it mean the same as the initial sentence? Share and discuss your ideas with the group. Teacher provides feedback to ensure the meaning of the sentence is maintained and to guide students in their progress.</p>	<p>In pairs, students verbalise the RAP strategy before applying it to their sentence.</p>
<p>Review and metacognition</p>	<p>Reflective journal. What new strategy have you learnt? How can it help when you are reading at home or in the classroom?</p>	<p>Students orally respond before writing. After I read the sentence, I can say... It helped me by... The action I learnt today is... I now know... I can use it when... I'm still not sure about...</p>

Appendices

- **Appendix 1-** Reading Interview
- **Appendix 2-** Charts developed by students.
 - What makes a good reader?
 - Why is reading important?
 - Questioning Chart
- **Appendix 3** – Reflection sheet
- **Appendix 4** -The Giant Panda (matching original sentences with paraphrased sentence)
- **Appendix 5-** Teaching How To Segment Sentences
- **Appendix 6** – RAP Poster

READING INTERVIEW

How do you feel about your learning?

Do you like to read?

What types of books do you like to read?

How often do you read?

What do you like/dislike about reading?

What would you consider to be your strengths in reading?

What would you consider to be your weakness in reading?

Do you have trouble understanding what you read?

What do you do when have trouble reading?

What strategies do you use?

Can you explain some of these strategies?

What do you hope to learn/achieve by working in this group?

Appendix 2

What makes a good reader?

- Re-read/read back when you don't understand
- Try to sound out words if you are stuck
- Break words into syllables
- Use punctuation to read fluently
- Reading expressively by using your voice
- Make a picture in their head- visualise
- Change words you don't understand to synonyms
- Chunk sentences
- Ask question before, during and after reading
- Paraphrase
- Make connections to what I already know

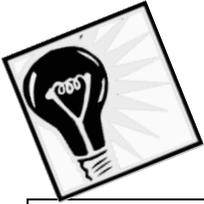
Why is reading important?

- It helps with spelling and punctuation
- It helps with my imagination
- I can learn new things
- It helps me with my future
- I can learn words I never knew before
- I can learn bigger and better words to use in my writing
- It gives me information

Questioning Chart

- Who is/ were...
- What happened when...
- Why...
- How...
- Where was...
- When did...
- What is...

MY LEARNING GOALS



Appendix 3



The action I learnt today...	I now know...
I can use it when...	I'm not sure about...
<u>Reflection Prompts</u> * I still wonder... * I am proud of... * I need to improve... * I still need to know... * Next time I will... * I got a lot better at... *The action I will use next time...	<u>Reflection</u>

Feedback (from teacher/peer/parent)

Appendix 4

The Giant Panda

<p>Like many animals, the giant panda needs a special environment to survive.</p>	<p>You find the arrow bamboo in country that is below 3500 metres high or that has farms.</p>
<p>Its natural habitat is the bamboo forest found in China.</p>	<p>It lives best naturally in bamboo forests in China.</p>
<p>Whilst there are many varieties of bamboo, the panda will eat only four types.</p>	<p>The giant panda has to have certain natural conditions to live.</p>
<p>Their basic diet is arrow bamboo.</p>	<p>The one they like to eat most is arrow bamboo.</p>
<p>The arrow bamboo will not grow in areas that are above 3500 metres in river valleys and plains that have been farmed.</p>	<p>It eats only four of the several types of bamboo.</p>

Teaching how to segment sentences.

The goose chatted with her neighbours all day long.

The violent gust of wind rattled along the rooftops.

A number of female lions coordinate their hunt by silently circling their prey.

Good food is vital for health but does not guarantee it.

When food intake matches nutritional requirements, your body weight remains stable.

The morning dew glistened at the coming of the new dawn.

It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents- except at occasional intervals.

The human skeleton serves as a scaffold which protects organs and supports muscles.

PARAPHRASING

Read the text.

Ask yourself questions:

*What are the main ideas?

*What are the details?



Put the ideas into your own words.

Try to change as many words as you can.