Building Vocabulary Knowledge by Teaching Paraphrasing with the Use of Synonyms Improves Comprehension for Year Six ESL Students

Procedure

The teaching procedure used in this study was based on John Munro’s (2006) Paraphrasing Teaching Strategy. This strategy was used with an emphasis on identifying key vocabulary and brainstorming synonyms to replace key words when paraphrasing. RAP was introduced to students in the first session as a simple way to remind them of the process used when paraphrasing:

R – Read the text
A – Ask yourself questions about the main ideas and details
P – Put the ideas into your own words and try to change as many words as you can.

Each session began with students having an orientation to the text they were using. Students participated in a discussion of what was in the text and some of the vocabulary that might occur, so that they could activate their prior knowledge and use this throughout the subsequent reading. Students were given the opportunity to have paraphrasing modelled for them and then to practise paraphrasing in small groups and individually. At the end of each session students were asked to reflect on what strategic actions they had used during the lesson or to paraphrase sentences individually for the teacher to review.

Ten lessons of 30 to 40 minutes were taught to the students over a period of four weeks. Each session was conducted as a small group focus lesson within the allocated reading block for the class. After teaching the series of lessons, students were post tested using the same testing materials and procedures as in pre testing.
Materials
Four texts were used throughout the series of lessons. The same texts were used for more than one session so that students were familiar with the concepts and could recycle the language used in reading to better comprehend texts. The texts were selected from a variety of resources targeted towards the middle to senior primary years. The following texts were used:

- Locusts Defeated by Air Attack (Rigby Collections 6, 2005)
- Whale Sharks by Greg Pyers (Rigby Collections 5, 2004)
- Watching the Judging at the Fair by Kerri Lane (Rigby Collections 5, 2004)

TEXTS
Locusts Defeated by Air Attack (Rigby Collections 6, 2005)

Paraphrasing Task (John Munro, 2005)


Synonyms Task (John Munro, 2005)


Watching the Judging at the Fair by Kerri Lane (Rigby Collections 5, 2004)

Whale Sharks by Greg Pyers (Rigby Collections 5, 2004)
### SESSION OUTLINES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 1</th>
<th>Adapted from John Munro’s Teaching a Paraphrasing Strategy (2006)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text:</strong></td>
<td>Locusts Defeated by Air Attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation to the text:</strong></td>
<td>Give each child a copy of the text. Discuss the title and accompanying pictures. Define what locusts are and how they are pests.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Introduce the strategy:** | When reading today, we are going to learn something you can do that will help you to remember and understand what you read. It is called paraphrasing. After you read each sentence from the text, you have a go at saying it in your own words. To help you remember how to paraphrase we are going to use the word RAP. (Give each student a RAP card which displays the strategy, Appendix 3)

  - **R** – Read the text.
  - **A** – Ask yourself questions about the main ideas and details.
  - **P** – Put the ideas into your own words. Try to change as many words as you can.

  *I will read the first sentence and then put it into my own words.*

  Teacher reads the first sentence aloud. Model the use of RAP by highlighting key words and details. Retell the sentence in your own words.

  *Let’s read the next sentence together. Read sentence. What is the main idea? Discuss and identify key words. What are some other words we could use in this sentence? Brainstorm words for swarmed, fields and young. Let’s try putting this sentence into our own words.*

  Teacher models and students each paraphrase the sentence using their words.

  Review the actions: Let us look at what we did here. Remember we used RAP. First we read and asked ourselves what the main idea was. Then we came up with other words we could use in this sentence. Then we put this sentence into our own words. See how it helped you to understand what the text said. Do you have any questions?

  Practise the actions: Repeat the process of reading sentence-by-sentence and brainstorming words for the main ideas. The teacher will model the paraphrase first and then ask the students to have a turn. Continually refer to the RAP card each student has to remind them of what they should be doing.

  Reflect on the actions: After the text has been paraphrased: *What do you tell yourself to do when you paraphrase?* Get children to articulate the RAP process. *How will paraphrasing help us when reading?* Discuss. Students are to record individual responses in their reading journals.
**Locusts Defeated by Air Attack**

**Session 2**

**Orientation to the text:** Review what was read of Locusts Defeated by Air Attack. Discuss what the students learnt. Paraphrase the reading from the previous session.

**Introduce the strategy:**

- **Last time we learnt something you can do that will help you to remember and understand what you read. It was called paraphrasing. To help you remember how to paraphrase we used the word RAP. Let’s review what we do when we RAP.**
  - **R** – Read the text.
  - **A** – Ask yourself questions about the main ideas and details.
  - **P** – Put the ideas into your own words. Try to change as many words as you can.

*Today when we use RAP, we are going to focus on the P. We need to use synonyms to change as many words as possible. Synonyms are different words that mean the same thing like small and little. What could be some synonyms for big? (Brainstorm and discuss)*

*When we read today we are going to find words that we are unsure of. We will write them on our synonyms chart and find other words that mean the same thing. This will help us to paraphrase our sentences. (Introduce synonyms chart, Appendix 4)*

Read a paragraph from the text together. Identify a word to place on the synonym chart. Fill in the synonym chart as a group. Use the synonyms chart to help paraphrase the text read. Repeat for another paragraph.

**Review the actions:** Let us look at what we did here. Remember we used RAP. (Have students articulate RAP) Then we tried to think of synonyms to replace words that mean the same thing. Let’s review our synonym chart. (Read over and add to the chart if able to) Do you have any questions?

**Practise the actions:** Read the remaining paragraphs sentence-by-sentence. Students to identify synonyms to add to the group chart. In pairs paraphrase the sentences using the synonyms listed. Share as a group. Continually refer to the RAP card each student has and the synonym chart to remind them of what they should be doing.

**Reflect on the actions:** After the text has been paraphrased: What do you tell yourself to do when you paraphrase? Get children to articulate the RAP process. What will help us to use our own words when paraphrasing? How will using synonyms when we paraphrase help us when reading? Discuss. Students are to record individual responses in their reading journals.
**Text:** Whale Sharks by Greg Pyers  
**Session 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation to the text:</th>
<th>Give each child a copy of the text. Discuss the title and accompanying pictures. What do we know about Whales? What do we know about Sharks? What can we infer about Whale Sharks?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Review the strategy:    | *When reading this text, what can we do to help us understand what it is about?* (Get students to articulate RAP and discuss the use of synonyms. Refer to posters and synonyms chart)  
*Today when we are going to paraphrase each paragraph. Remember to add new words to the synonym chart and use them when we RAP.*  
Read a paragraph from the text together. Identify a word to place on the synonym chart. Fill in the synonym chart as a group. Use the synonyms chart to help paraphrase the text read. |
| Practise the actions:   | Read a paragraph from the text together. Identify a word to place on the synonym chart. Fill in the synonym chart as a group. Use the synonyms chart to help paraphrase the text read.  
Repeat for the next paragraph, working in pairs. Share as a group. Discuss the synonyms and how the students came up with them. |
| Review and reflect on the actions: | *What did you do today that helped you to understand your reading?* Review synonyms chart and words added. Identify any more synonyms that can be added to the words listed. |

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**Text:** Whale Sharks by Greg Pyers  
**Session 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation to the text:</th>
<th>Review what was read of Whale Sharks. Discuss what the students learnt. Paraphrase the reading from the previous session and discuss the synonyms identified from the synonym chart.</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Review the strategy:    | *When reading this text, what can we do to help us understand what it is about?* (Get students to articulate RAP and discuss the use of synonyms. Refer to posters and synonyms chart)  
*Today when we are going to paraphrase each paragraph. Remember to add new words to the synonym chart and use them when we RAP.*  
Read a paragraph from the text together. Identify a word to place on the synonym chart. Fill in the synonym chart as a group. Use the synonyms chart to help paraphrase the text read. |
| Practise the actions:   | Read a paragraph from the text together. Identify a word to place on the synonym chart. Fill in the synonym chart as a group. Use the synonyms chart to help paraphrase the text read.  
Repeat for the next paragraph, working in pairs. Share as a group. Discuss the synonyms and how the students came up with them. |
| Review and reflect on the actions: | *What is paraphrasing? What are synonyms?* Discuss questions and share answers with the group.  
*How do they help us to become better readers?* Reflect in reader’s journal. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text: Risky Rescues by Kathy White</th>
<th><strong>Session 5</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation to the text:</strong></td>
<td>Give each child a copy of the text. Discuss the title and accompanying pictures. What do we do when we take a risk? How could rescuing someone be risky?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Review the strategy:</strong></td>
<td>Have students articulate RAP. Give each student an individual synonym chart. Review the group synonym chart and brainstorm ways to find other words that mean the same thing. Introduce the Thesaurus. <em>This is a thesaurus. It looks like a dictionary, but instead of telling us the meaning of a word, it lists other words that mean the same thing. The thesaurus can help us when we are trying to find synonyms for words we read.</em> Practice looking up a word in the thesaurus and reading the synonyms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practise the actions:</strong></td>
<td>Read a paragraph from the text together. Identify a word to place on the synonym chart. Fill in the synonym chart as a group (Use the thesaurus if necessary). Use the synonyms chart to help paraphrase the text read. Share the paraphrased work. Repeat for the next paragraph, working in pairs. Share as a group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Review and reflect on the actions:</strong></td>
<td><em>What did you do today that helped you to understand your reading?</em> Review individual and group synonyms chart and words added. Identify any more synonyms that can be added to the words listed.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text: Risky Rescues by Kathy White</th>
<th><strong>Session 6</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation to the text:</strong></td>
<td>Review what was read of Risky Rescues. Discuss what the students learnt. Paraphrase the reading from the previous session and discuss the synonyms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Review the strategy:</strong></td>
<td>Have students articulate RAP and how they would use the synonyms chart to help them read. Review how to use a thesaurus and why it is useful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practise the actions:</strong></td>
<td>Read a paragraph from the text together. Identify a word to place on the synonym chart. Fill in the synonym chart as a group (Use the thesaurus if necessary). Use the synonyms chart to help paraphrase the text read. Share the paraphrased work. Repeat for the next paragraph, working in pairs. Share as a group. Teacher to provide feedback on the accuracy of meaning and grammar when paraphrasing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Review and reflect on the actions:</strong></td>
<td><em>What did you do today that helped you to understand your reading?</em> Review individual and group synonyms chart and words added. Identify any more synonyms that can be added to the words listed.</td>
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</table>
### Session 7

**Text:** Risky Rescues by Kathy White

**Orientation to the text:**
Review what was read of Risky Rescues. Discuss what the students learnt. Paraphrase the reading from the previous session and discuss the synonyms.

**Review the strategy:**
Have students articulate RAP and how they would use the synonyms chart to help them read. Review how to use a thesaurus and why it is useful.

**Practise the actions:**
Read a paragraph from the text together. Identify a word to place on the synonym chart. Fill in the synonym chart as a group (Use the thesaurus if necessary). Use the synonyms chart to help paraphrase the text read.

Repeat for the remainder of the text, working in pairs. Share as a group. Students to share individual words identified to place on synonym chart. Discuss their meaning and expand upon vocab knowledge using other students’ prior experience and knowledge. Teacher to provide feedback on the accuracy of meaning and grammar when paraphrasing.

**Review and reflect on the actions:**
*What did you do today that helped you to understand your reading?*
Review how to paraphrase using RAP. Record a journal entry on how using RAP has helped students understand the text they read.

### Session 8

**Text:** Watching the Judging at the Fair by Kerri Lane

**Orientation to the text:**
Give each child a copy of the text. Discuss the title and accompanying pictures. What is a fair? What might we see at a fair? What is a judge? What could be judged at a fair?

**Review the strategy:**
*When reading this text, what can we do to help us understand what it is about?*
(Get students to articulate RAP and discuss the use of synonyms. Refer to posters and synonyms chart)
Review how to use the thesaurus and the benefits of using it.

**Practise the actions:**
Read a paragraph from the text together. Identify a word to place on the synonym chart. Fill in the synonym chart as a group (Use the thesaurus if necessary). Use the synonyms chart to help paraphrase the text read. Paraphrase each paragraph. Share paraphrased paragraphs with the group.

Repeat for the next paragraph, working in pairs. Share as a group. Discuss what words have been identified for the synonyms chart. Discuss how the synonyms were brainstormed and what resources where used to create the list.

Repeat for the next paragraph, working independently. Share paraphrased paragraphs, discuss synonym usage.

**Review and reflect on the actions:**
*What did you do today that helped you to understand your reading?*
Review individual sentences and paragraphs paraphrased. Reflect on the use of RAP and the synonym chart to facilitate independent reading and learning.
### Session 9

**Text:** Watching the Judging at the Fair by Kerri Lane

**Orientation to the text:**
Review what was read of Watching the Judging at the Fair. Discuss what the students learnt. Paraphrase the reading from the previous session and discuss the synonyms.

**Review the strategy:**
*When reading this text, what can we do to help us understand what it is about?*
(Get students to articulate RAP and discuss the use of synonyms. Refer to posters and synonyms chart)

*What can we use to help us find synonyms for words?*
Discuss the students various strategies for creating synonyms.

**Practise the actions:**
Read a paragraph from the text together. Identify a word to place on the synonym chart. Fill in the synonym chart as a group (Use the thesaurus if necessary). Use the synonyms chart to help paraphrase the text read. Paraphrase each paragraph. Share paraphrased paragraphs with the group.

Repeat for the next paragraph, working in pairs. Share as a group.

Repeat for the next paragraph, working independently. Share paraphrased paragraphs, discuss synonym usage.

**Review and reflect on the actions:**
*What did you do today that helped you to understand your reading?*
Review individual sentences and paragraphs paraphrased. Reflect on the use of RAP and the synonym chart to facilitate independent reading and learning.

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### Session 10

**Text:** Watching the Judging at the Fair by Kerri Lane

**Orientation to the text:**
Review what was read of Watching the Judging at the Fair. Discuss what the students learnt. Paraphrase the reading from the previous session and discuss the synonyms. Make some predictions about the story ending.

**Review the strategy:**
*When reading this text, what can we do to help us understand what it is about?*
(Get students to articulate RAP and discuss the use of synonyms. Refer to posters and synonyms chart)

*What can we use to help us find synonyms for words?*
Discuss the students various strategies for creating synonyms.

**Practise the actions:**
Read a paragraph from the text together. Identify a word to place on the synonym chart. Fill in the synonym chart as a group (Use the thesaurus if necessary). Use the synonyms chart to help paraphrase the text read. Paraphrase each paragraph. Share paraphrased paragraphs with the group.

Repeat for the next paragraph, working in pairs. Share as a group. Discuss what words have been identified for the synonyms chart. Discuss how the synonyms were brainstormed and what resources where used to create the list.

Repeat for the next paragraph, working independently. Share paraphrased paragraphs, discuss synonym usage.

**Review and reflect on the actions:**
*How does paraphrasing help us to be better readers? How does using synonyms help us to paraphrase? Discuss and share ideas.*
*What can I do to help me understand text I read in the future?* Reflect in readers journal

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**Page 8**
HOW TO PARAPHRASE

Read the text.

Ask yourself questions about the main idea and details.

Put the ideas into your own words and try to change as many words as you can.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>SYNONYMS</th>
<th>SENTENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Joyful, Cheerful, Glad, Jolly, Pleased</td>
<td>I am happy that I have finished my homework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To feel positive about what you are doing.</td>
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</table>
