

Teaching year two students with English as a second language the strategy of paraphrasing improves their comprehension of fiction texts.

Materials

Materials used included the following-

Pre and Post testing tasks:

- Torch tests of reading comprehension, passage A3 - Lizards Love Eggs and answer sheet
- Running Record (PM Benchmark Kit)
- Synonym Word Test
- Paraphrasing Test

Teaching Sessions:

Five fiction texts were selected. These texts were determined appropriate for the intervention group as based on Fry's Readability Procedure.

Within the teaching unit, the following materials were used:

- RAP poster (see Appendix 2)
- Paper and pencils for recording paraphrasing tasks
- Flashcards and felt tip pens for recording synonyms
- Sticky notes
- Highlighters

Procedure

The pretesting tasks including the Torch reading comprehension test, the Paraphrasing test and Synonyms test were administered to students in a withdrawal room, as group tasks over three sessions on three consecutive days. The Running Records were administered individually to obtain text levels as was the Self Efficacy Questionnaire.

The teaching unit was taught over three weeks, with students withdrawn from their regular classroom at the same time each day in the morning session between 10:00am and

11:00am. Four lessons were taught each in weeks one and two, with the final two lessons taught in week three. The lessons lasted in duration of approximately 40 - 50 minutes. The teaching unit was based on John Munro's model of the Comprehension Paraphrasing Strategy (2006). The RAP acronym was displayed on a poster to cue students in following the three steps in the strategy:

Read a paragraph

Ask yourself. "What was the main idea and details?"

Put the information into your own words by changing as many words as you can.

The Collins Model of Teaching and Learning (1989) was used as a guide to develop lessons as students work through the learning process. The six principles of the model – three of the teacher and three of the student involve both the responsibility of the teacher and that of the student. The teacher being responsible for: modeling – teacher models the task; coaching – the teacher acts as a guide offering prompts and feedback; and scaffolding and fading – teacher provides few cues as the student becomes increasingly independent. The responsibility of the student being: articulation – the student describes what they have learnt and how they can use it; reflection – student reflects on what they know now that they didn't know before; and exploration – students explain how they can use what they have learned in new contexts.

In the initial lesson, the strategy was introduced as a way of helping readers to better understand what they read to give them an overall understanding of the objective for the unit. The strategy was modelled extensively to allow students to become familiar with the strategy and to feel comfortable in making their own initial attempts at paraphrasing. The teacher gave a brief summary of the text to allow students to access the topic and get knowledge ready. The 'RAP' poster was referred to as a guide for students to help cue them to take an active part in the lesson. Each time the teacher modelled a sentence paraphrase, she reviewed the action then allowed students to practise themselves, followed by reviewing what was learnt. The teacher allowed students to ask questions as they worked through the strategy. The first two lessons were heavily scaffolded by the teacher and the strategy was taught at a sentence level. Each step in the lesson was taught at a moderate pace to give students time to consolidate and review. The students'

paraphrased sentences were recorded on the whiteboard in large text so that the teacher and students could review together. Discussion took place as to which sentences were effective paraphrases with the sentence being said another way and the emphasis on maintaining meaning. Synonyms were underlined then recorded onto flashcards for use in future lessons to assist with new vocabulary acquisition. At the conclusion of the lesson, students were asked to articulate what they had learnt orally, with the teacher providing supportive and constructive feedback for the ideas given.

In subsequent lessons, students progressed from paraphrasing sentences and pairs of sentences to paraphrasing paragraphs. Each lesson followed a similar format: read a selected passage from previous lesson and paraphrase orally; play a game with synonym flash cards; read over the steps on the RAP poster; read new passage together and highlight key words and identify the main idea; write down key words to be changed and finally make attempts at recording paraphrased sentence or paragraph. The conclusion of each lesson was devoted to discussing or writing down what we had been learning and how this helps us with our reading. The RAP poster was referred to quite frequently in initial lessons and less often as students became more apt at using the strategy. The highlighting of key words was an important step in the process due to the ESL nature of the learners within the intervention group. Often, students indicated that particular words were new to them. The discussion surrounding word meanings and key words had an impact on their understanding of the main idea. Paired or group talk was necessary to allow students to access their schematic knowledge. Often, new vocabulary needed to be 'unpacked' in order for the group to brainstorm synonyms and in turn paraphrase effectively and maintain meaning. Teacher support was necessary, however as students progressed through each lesson, they were encouraged to become more independent in identifying key words and understanding the main idea and details within the sentence or paragraph. Students became less reliant on the teacher for support as they became familiar with the process.

In the final two lessons, teacher support was reduced to a minimum with students individually reading the new text (silently). Students were not directed to work through the paraphrasing strategy systematically by the teacher, but were asked to paraphrase a

paragraph independently - the final outcome being to paraphrase at a paragraph level independently. The pace of the lesson had increased as the scaffolding had decreased. Students were expected to be familiar enough with the strategy to use it on their own and paraphrase independently. Students in the control group participated in their regular classroom program.

Teaching Unit – Paraphrasing

John Munro’s Comprehension – Paraphrasing Strategy (2006)

Overall Objective – to use paraphrasing as a strategy to comprehend fiction texts.

Session 1

Learning outcome – To describe paraphrasing as a strategy that helps to understand what we read.

Text: Crosby Crocodile’s Disguise

“I am going to teach you something that you can do that will help you to remember what you read. It is called paraphrasing. First we will read a paragraph from a story, then we will look at each sentence more carefully and say it in our own words.

We can use this word, ‘RAP’ to help us remember what to do. R – read the text. A – ask yourself questions about the main idea and details. P – put the ideas into your own words in complete sentences.”

Today we are going to read a story about a crocodile who does not like the way his body looks.

Teacher models paraphrasing and cues student activity:

“Look at the first paragraph. I am going to read it aloud then I want you to read it with me. After that, I will look at the first sentence and ask myself ‘what is the main idea, and what are the details?’

Teacher explains meaning of ‘main idea’ and ‘details’ by drawing examples from the first paragraph.

Now I am going to say it another way by changing some of the words.

Now I’d like you to have a try.

Teacher guides students through the paraphrasing strategy referring to the RAP poster.

Sentence read	Teacher paraphrases	Students paraphrase
Crosby Crocodile stood before the mirror.	A crocodile called Crosby stood in front of a mirror.	
“Just look at me,” he sighed.	“Have a peek at me,” he groaned.	
“My mouth is too big.”	“These jaws are enormous.”	

Teacher reviews the action:

Let us look at what we did here. We read a sentence and then said it in another way. See how it helped you to understand what the text said? Which sentences do you think are the most effective – that is, which sentences have we changed but kept the main idea the same?

Do you have any questions?

Students practise:

Let's try this again with the next sentence. We will check if we understand the meaning of all of the words in the sentence too.

Teacher and students read the next sentence and practise paraphrasing aloud using the RAP strategy. Record attempts on the whiteboard.

Teacher reviews the action:

Let us look at what we did. We read the sentence, and then we asked ourselves questions about the main idea. Next we put it into our own words and we changed as many words as we could. This helps us to understand what we read.

Let's write down some of the words we changed – these are called synonyms and they can help us when using this strategy. Teacher records words on flashcards for future reference.

Can you tell me what you have learnt today? How could this help you in your reading? Teacher reinforces what students have learnt and gives positive feedback for their attempts.

Session 2

Learning Outcome – to use synonyms to paraphrase text at a sentence level.

Text: Crosby Crocodile's Disguise

Within this session, the teacher reviews what was taught in Session one. Students are encouraged to articulate what they learnt about paraphrasing.

The teacher models paraphrasing a sentence read in session one, then asks students to repeat the task.

The teacher then directs students to focus on the next paragraph in the text and follows the following teaching sequence:

Teacher	Students
Read aloud the next paragraph in the text.	Read aloud the paragraph in the text (by reading same paragraph as the teacher).
Guide students through RAP strategy to paraphrase each sentence in the paragraph. Record students' paraphrased sentences on the whiteboard.	Students work together to paraphrase sentence by sentence as a group.
Direct students to write their paraphrase in pairs. (One student pair, one student with teacher).	Discuss ideas with a partner, using the RAP poster as a guide. Record paraphrase of each sentence read.
Ask students to share their paraphrased sentences. Correct responses.	Read paraphrased sentences aloud and discuss which synonyms were used.
Record synonyms used on flashcards. Ask students to group synonyms together from Session 1&2 to reinforce understanding.	Students turn over flashcards, read each word and group synonyms together. E.g. big/large/huge cover/conceal/disguise cupboard/wardrobe/closet

Sessions 3 - 8

Texts: A Bull in a China Shop (Session 3 & 4), The Ghost and the Sausage (Session 5 & 6), Misha Disappears (Session 7 & 8).

Learning Outcome - students paraphrase at a paragraph level with support.

These sessions followed the format below:

Teacher	Students
Guide students to read/retell a passage from previous session. Revise the use of the RAP strategy.	Read selected passage from previous session. Orally retell passage in own words using the RAP strategy.
Introduce new text. Guide students to read the paragraph twice.	Students read new text together. (Session 3 & 4) Students read new text silently. (Session 5 – 8)
Ask students to highlight or write key words on sticky notes then suggest possible	Highlight key words or write each key word on a sticky note. Share responses with the

synonyms for each.	group. Suggest then write down synonyms.
Ask students how they will go about paraphrasing the paragraph to help them understand what it is about.	Students respond by describing the strategy. E.g. <i>'first I will read the text, next I will ask myself questions about the main idea and details. Finally I will try to change as many words as I can and say it another way.'</i>
Direct students to write a paraphrase of their paragraph as a group or in pairs. Provide support where needed.	Paraphrase the paragraph by working through each step in the strategy.
Ask students to describe how the strategy helped them to understand the text.	Reflect on learning – <i>'today I have been practicing...'</i> <i>'this helps me to... because...'</i> <i>'Next time I read I can...'</i>

Sessions 9 & 10

Text: Monster for Hire

Learning Outcome – to paraphrase at a paragraph level individually.

Teacher	Students
Guide students to read/retell a passage from previous session. Briefly revise the use of the RAP strategy.	Read selected passage from previous session. Orally retell passage in own words using the RAP strategy.
Introduce new text. Guide students to read the paragraph twice individually.	Students read new text silently.
Ask students to individually work through the strategy to paraphrase the paragraph.	Independently work through each step in the RAP strategy, then write own paraphrase of the paragraph.
Ask students to describe how the strategy helped them to understand the text.	Reflect on learning – <i>'today I have been practicing...'</i> <i>'this helps me to... because...'</i> <i>'I could use this in my future learning by...'</i>
* Session 10	Students individually write down the steps they can take when paraphrasing text.

Texts

Lesson	Text	Genre	Fry's Readability Level
1 & 2	Crosby Crocodile's Disguise	Fiction	Year 2
3 & 4	A Bull in a China Shop	Fiction	Year 2
5 & 6	The Ghost and the Sausage	Fiction	Year 2
7 & 8	Misha Disappears	Fiction	Year 2
9 & 10	Monster for Hire	Fiction	Year 2

R – Read the text

A – Ask yourself questions about the main idea and details.

P – Put the text into your own words by changing as many words as you can.