

Teaching Year 5/6 students to use synonyms whilst paraphrasing improves comprehension

Procedure:

The participants were all individually pre and post tested. They were withdrawn from the classroom for the ten lessons. Each lesson went for 45-50 minutes, and was conducted in the Special Education room. The itinerary was as follows:

- Week 1: pre testing, Lesson 1 & 2
- Week 2: Lessons 3, 4 & 5
- Week 3: Lessons 6, 7 & 8
- Week 4: Lessons 9 & 10, post testing

Please see Appendix 1 for more detailed information about the teaching unit.

Appendix 1:

Teaching unit: John Munro's Comprehension- Paraphrasing Strategy (2005)

Lesson 1:

Introduce the strategy: We are learning things you can do to help you read. One thing you can do is to make a picture in your mind. Today we are going to learn another thing you can do. What you do is tell yourself what you have read. After you have read a sentence, you say it to yourself, in your own way. You try to change as many words as you can. Let's practice it.

Teacher models paraphrasing and cues student activity: Look at the first sentence. I will read it and I want you to read it to yourself with me. Then I will try saying it another way. Then I will ask you to try.

(Read some sentences that have accompanying pictures with the child. After each sentence, you model paraphrasing it and then have the student practice it. You may need to begin with changing individual words in sentences first (that is, the students suggest synonyms).

Teacher reviews the action: Let us look at what we did here. We read each sentence and then said it in other ways. See how it helped you to understand what the text said. Do you have any questions?

Teacher models and students practice: Let's do this together with another paragraph.

Read this text.

Teacher reviews the action: What do you tell yourself to do when you paraphrase?

Student transfers the action to other texts

Students paraphrase texts individually: Now you are going to practise doing this to some sentences all by yourself. Try to think of a different way of saying each sentence. Read each sentence. Say it to yourself in another way and write down what you thought of. Try not to use words that are in each written sentence.

Students review what they did. Teacher says: At the end of our first session can you tell me what you know about paraphrasing and what steps you should follow to paraphrase a text.

(Students' possible answers:

1. The first step in paraphrasing is to read a text.
2. The second step is to ask yourself questions about the main idea and details.
3. The third step is to put the main ideas and details into your own words using complete sentences).

Lesson 2:

During this session, the student consolidates the use of the strategy. The student reviews the steps involved in paraphrasing and the teacher gives additional practice in paraphrasing single sentences and paragraphs.

Monitor the students work and give appropriate feedback. Pupils transfer the strategy to new texts by being shown a text and saying what they will do.

Lessons 3-10:

Comprehension - paraphrasing ©John Munro (Copy of table to be posted in mail along with parental permission slips).

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