

Hypothesis:

Learning to paraphrase and generate questions from factual texts will improve a middle year's student's reading comprehension of exposition texts.

Procedure

When teaching a learning strategy, teachers should identify the strategy, explain why it is useful, demonstrate its use, give students practice in applying it to a learning situation, and show them how to evaluate its effectiveness and what to do if it does not work.

Before we commenced the reading it was important to have the student thinking about the nature of the material to be read (get his information ready) and be clear as to the reasons the particular text was to be read. It was imperative to for him know the type of genre he was working with as the demands on the reader vary depending on the purpose for reading. When working with an expositional text where you are required to seek out information and remember the facts and it is assumed that the student has the strategies in place to achieve the set task.

Students with reading difficulties are often 'passive' learners who use very few strategies to promote their understanding of difficult material. Through explicit teaching of the reading strategies necessary to access the material they are given these students can become active, more confident learners.

Student was told that there were two strategies that would help him to comprehend and recall the factual material that he had to read for school.

We discussed the reasons for reading a factual text such as his SOSE or Science texts and he indicated that it could be to find out information about a particular topic, study for a test or maybe just to find the answer to something he want to know about. We talked about the types of questions found at the end of a unit in a text book and why it was sometimes difficult for him to come up with the answers. He felt that he was better at responding to the questions when the teacher asked them orally.

He was encouraged to think about the following questions before he commenced the reading. These questions (Appendix 4) were provided on a cue card for him to refer to before he commenced reading.

- What is my purpose for reading?
- What do I already know?
- What do I think I will find out?

General Objectives:

1. To help the student learn how to acquire and retain information from the reading of factual material.
2. To apply the reading strategies of paraphrasing and self-questioning in the comprehension of factual material.

Specific Objectives:

1. To learn to paraphrase sentences within the factual text.
2. To be able to apply their knowledge of synonyms to their paraphrasing of the sentence.
3. To be able to explain what they do when they paraphrase,
4. To introduce self-questioning as an appropriate comprehension strategy.
5. To be able to generate an appropriate question for factual material.
6. To be able to explain what they do when they construct a question from a sentence.

Ten teaching sessions were conducted over a four week period using expository texts that were related to the information covered in his SOSE (Studies of Society and Environment) and SCI (Science) classes. The reading material covered the areas of early explorers, world geography, culture, Ecosystems, food chains, food webs and pollution.

The reading material was at instructional level for the student so that he could focus on the comprehension strategies being taught rather than decoding.

Each session lasted between 30 – 40 minutes

The lesson Foci:

- **Lesson 1**

Explain to the student that he will be working on expository texts so he needs to find the facts about the subject.

This first session involved modeling and demonstration of the paraphrasing strategy.

The learning strategy (paraphrasing) itself must be learned in order to be used.

Paraphrasing is personal and represents the construction of meaning. Understanding is putting the ideas in our own words and not repeating the words of the author verbatim. (Book Bridges – A Family Literacy Program– Book 2 – page 86)

- **Lesson 2**

Review the function of synonyms in paraphrasing and practice substituting synonyms for the appropriate words.

- **Lesson 3**

Guided practice in reading a sentence and paraphrasing it.

The student reads the sentence out loud and stops. He then paraphrases the sentence into his own words.

- **Lesson 4**

Self directed reading and paraphrasing.

- **Lesson 5**

Teach about the types of questioning we want to focus on; literal questioning (Use question prompts - Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How.)

Teach the student how to relate the question directly to the paraphrasing of a piece of factual information.

Teacher models the self-questioning strategy after paraphrasing each sentence.

‘According to Robert Sternberg, the best way for a teacher to go about teaching her students self questioning is to actually model self questioning explicitly. “The modeling of specific teaching and learning strategies are powerful when it involves thinking aloud” (Sternberg,1996.p.57).’

- **Lesson 6**

Guided practice in reading, paraphrasing and self-questioning (Question prompts are available for the student to refer to).

- **Lesson 7**

Guided practice in reading, paraphrasing and self-questioning (Question prompts are available for the student to refer to).

- **Lesson 8**

Student practices self-directed reading, paraphrasing and self-questioning (Question prompts are available for the student to refer to).

- **Lesson 9**

Continue self-directed reading, paraphrasing and self-questioning strategies (Student should use the strategies without the use of question prompts).

Once the student fully grasps the concept of self questioning and gets the idea of the types of questions to be asked, any given question starters must be eliminated from the process of self questioning.

Mastery of this learning strategy is solely based on the learner's ability to formulate his or her own questions. (Wilson & Jan, 1993)

- **Lesson 10**

Continue self-directed reading, paraphrasing and self-questioning strategies.

Appendix 1

Teaching Unit for Paraphrasing and Self-questioning (Generating questions from factual texts)

This teaching unit was devised in association with this students SOSE and Science teachers. It was deemed appropriate that this student work on material that was to be covered in class during the third term.

Many of the texts used in Science and SOSE in eight are actually quite difficult for this student as his decoding skills and reading rate are several years behind those of his peers. Because paraphrasing and self-questioning provides such a good scaffold for this student to work with, it was a good test to see how effective the strategies would be on his recall and understanding of the text.

Lesson One

Aim:

- To introduce the strategy of paraphrasing.
- Identify the Key nouns and verbs in each sentence.
- To identify the difference between an expository (factual) text and a narrative.

Materials:

Jacaranda SOSE 2 Studies of Society & Environment. *G. Ciavarella and A. Calandra* Chapter 4 The Age of Discovery. Unit 4.1 Before the Adventure Began. Pg 60-61

1. Discuss the purpose for reading this text and how it is different to a narrative text.
2. Discuss what the author's intent was in writing this text.
3. Talk about the time in history when these adventures took place and from which countries did the come from. Discuss what the world may have been like during these times.
4. Look at the features of the text (heading and sub-headings) and other visual features such as maps, illustrations and pictures.
5. Identify the nouns and verbs as the key words to be focusing on.
6. Teacher reads the first sentence and then models the paraphrasing strategy. (It is important to point out to the student that you should put the information into your own words.)
7. Teacher repeats step 4 several times.
8. Student reads the next sentence and the teacher paraphrases the main point.
9. The teacher reads the next sentence and the student has a try at paraphrasing the main idea.
10. Continue to alternate the roles of reading and paraphrasing to the end of the text.
11. Discuss with the student the main facts he recalls within the text.
12. These points are noted down as part of the assessment of his recall of the facts. (The points are compared with the actual key points of the text.)

Lesson Two

Aim:

- To review the paraphrasing strategy.
- To create an atmosphere of active reading through paraphrasing.
- To revise the purpose of an expository text.
- To practice substituting synonyms for appropriate words in the text.

Materials:

Jacaranda SOSE 2 Studies of Society & Environment. *G. Ciavarella and A. Calandra* Chapter 4 The Age of Discovery. Unit 4.2 Sailing and the Portuguese. Pg 62-63

1. Discuss the purpose for reading this text on the Portuguese and sailing.
2. Look at the features of the text (heading and sub-headings) and other visual features such as maps, illustrations and pictures.
3. Revise the work on nouns and verbs from the previous lesson.
4. Introduce the use of synonyms when paraphrasing.
5. Teacher reads the first sentence and then models the paraphrasing strategy.
6. Student identifies the synonyms that were used. (It is important to remind the student that you should put the information into your own words.)
7. The teacher reads the next sentence and the student paraphrases the main point.
8. Continue to alternate the roles of reading and paraphrasing though the student should be doing most of the paraphrasing by the end of the text.
9. Discuss with the student the main facts he recalls within the text.
10. These points are noted down as part of the assessment of his recall of the facts. (The points are compared with the actual key points of the text.)

Lesson Three

Aim:

- To practice using the strategy of paraphrasing.
- To encourage active and independent reading.
- To retell the information in each sentence in student's own words.
- To improve reading comprehension and recall of the facts.

Materials:

Jacaranda SOSE 2 Studies of Society & Environment. *G. Ciavarella and A. Calandra* Chapter 4 The Age of Discovery. Unit 4.3 Diaz and da Gama. Pg 64-65

1. Discuss the purpose for reading this text about Diaz and da Gama.
2. Look at the features of the text (heading and sub-headings) and other visual features such as maps, illustrations and pictures.
3. Student reads the first sentence and then uses the paraphrasing strategy.
4. The strategy is practiced to the end of the text.
5. Discuss with the student the main fact that he recalls within the text.
6. These points are noted down as part of the assessment of his recall of the facts. (The points are compared with the actual key points of the text.)

Lesson Four

Aim:

- To use the strategy of paraphrasing whilst reading the text with out assistance.
- To encourage independent reading.
- To involve the student actively in their own reading

Materials:

Jacaranda SOSE 2 Studies of Society & Environment. *G. Ciavarella and A. Calandra* Chapter 4 The Age of Discovery. Unit 4.4 Columbus and the New World. Pg 66-67

1. Discuss the purpose for reading this text about Columbus.
2. Discuss where the New World would have been in that point in history.

3. Look at the features of the text (heading and sub-headings) and other visual features such as maps, illustrations and pictures.
4. Student reads the first sentence and then uses the paraphrasing strategy.
5. The strategy is practiced to the end of the text.
6. Discuss with the student the main fact that he recalls within the text.
7. These points are noted down as part of the assessment of his recall of the facts. (The points are compared with the actual key points of the text.)

Lesson Five

Aim:

- To introduce the strategy of generating questions (self-questioning) from the text.
- To introduce the question prompt card. (Who, What, Where, Why, and How?)
- To establish self-questioning as a reading strategy for the student.

Materials:

Jacaranda SOSE 2 Studies of Society & Environment. *G. Ciavarella and A. Calandra* Chapter 4 The Age of Discovery. Unit 4.5 Conquest and Empire. Pg 68-69

1. Discuss the purpose for reading this text on conquest and empire.
2. Look at the features of the text (heading and sub-headings) and other visual features such as maps, illustrations and pictures.
3. Introduce generating of questions (self-questioning) strategy as another way of clarifying the text.
4. Teacher shows the student the question prompt card: Who, What, When, Where, Why, How?
5. Teacher reads the first sentence, paraphrases it and then generates a question from the facts using one of the question starters.
6. Teacher repeats step 4 several times noting to the student how they must also be able to give the answer.
7. Student reads the next sentence, paraphrases it and the teacher generates a question from the facts.
8. The teacher reads the next sentence and the student paraphrases it and generates a question.
9. Continue to alternate the roles of reading, paraphrasing and questioning to the end of the text.
10. Discuss with the student what he recalls as the main facts within the text.
11. These points are noted down as part of the assessment of his recall of the facts. (The points are compared with the actual key points of the text.)

Lesson Six

Aim:

- To practice the strategy of self-questioning after each sentence.
- To develop an understanding of the specific purposes of questioning.
- To clarify meaning when paraphrasing through generating questions.

Materials:

Jacaranda SOSE 2 Studies of Society & Environment. *G. Ciavarella and A. Calandra* Chapter 4 The Age of Discovery. Unit 4.6 Around the World with Magellan. Pg 70-71

1. Discuss the purpose for reading this text about Magellan.

2. Look at the features of the text (heading and sub-headings) and other visual features such as maps, illustrations and pictures.
3. Revise the strategies of paraphrasing and self-questioning.
4. Student reads the sentences, paraphrases the information and generates a question from the facts.
5. Continue to read, paraphrase and generate questions to the end of the text.
6. Discuss with the student what he recalls as the main facts within the text.
7. These points are noted down as part of the assessment of his recall of the facts. (The points are compared with the actual key points of the text.)

Lesson Seven

Aim:

- To use the strategies of paraphrasing and self-questioning (generating questions) after reading each sentence.
- To know the reasons for using paraphrasing and self-questioning as a reading comprehension strategy.
- Record the sentences generated by the student.

Materials:

Longman SCI 2 G. Phillips, G. Rickard, K. Johnstone Chapter 7 Ecology Unit 7.1 Ecosystems Pg 161-163

1. Discuss the purpose for reading this text about Ecosystems.
2. Look at the features of the text (heading and sub-headings) and other visual features such as maps, illustrations and pictures.
3. Revise the strategies of paraphrasing and self-questioning.
4. Student reads the sentences, paraphrases the information and generates a question from the facts.
5. Continue to read, paraphrase and generate questions to the end of the text.
6. Discuss with the student what he recalls as the main facts within the text.
7. These points are noted down as part of the assessment of his recall of the facts. (The points are compared with the actual key points of the text.)

Lesson Eight

Aim:

- To use the strategies of paraphrasing and self-questioning (generating questions) independently after reading each sentence.
- Record the questions generated by the student.
- To have the student answer their own questions about the text.

Materials:

Longman SCI 2 G. Phillips, G. Rickard, K. Johnstone Chapter 7 Ecology Unit 7.2 Physical Attributes of an Ecosystems Pg 166-168

1. Discuss the purpose for reading this text about the physical attribute of an ecosystem.
2. Look at the features of the text (heading and sub-headings) and other visual features such as maps, illustrations and pictures.
3. Revise the strategies of paraphrasing and self-questioning.
4. Student reads the sentences, paraphrases the information and generates a question from the facts.
5. Continue to read, paraphrase and generate questions to the end of the text.

6. Discuss with the student what he recalls as the main facts within the text.
7. These points are noted down as part of the assessment of his recall of the facts. (The points are compared with the actual key points of the text.)

Lesson Nine

Aim:

- To use the strategies of paraphrasing and self-questioning (generating questions) after reading each sentence.
- To create an atmosphere of active reading through self-questioning.
- Record the sentences generated by the student.

Materials:

Longman SCI 2 G. Phillips, G. Rickard, K. Johnstone Chapter 7 Ecology Unit 7.3 Food Chains and food Webs: Interactions of Life Pg 172-174

1. Discuss the purpose for reading this text about food chains and food webs.
2. Look at the features of the text (heading and sub-headings) and other visual features such as maps, illustrations and pictures.
3. Revise the strategies of paraphrasing and self-questioning.
4. Student reads the sentences, paraphrases the information and generates a question from the facts. The questions
5. Continue to read, paraphrase and generate questions to the end of the text.
6. Student answers the questions he has generated from the text.
7. Discuss with the student what he recalls as the main facts within the text.
8. These points are noted down as part of the assessment of his recall of the facts. (The points are compared with the actual key points of the text.)

Lesson Ten

Aim:

- To independently use the strategies of paraphrasing and self-questioning (generating questions) after reading each sentence.
- To improve reading comprehension and recall of factual information.
- Record the sentences generated by the student.

Materials:

Longman SCI 2 G. Phillips, G. Rickard, K. Johnstone Chapter 7 Ecology Unit 7.1 Effects of Human Civilization on the Ecosystem Pg 178-181

1. Discuss the purpose for reading this text about the effects of human civilization on the ecosystem .
2. Look at the features of the text (heading and sub-headings) and other visual features such as maps, illustrations and pictures.
3. Revise the strategies of paraphrasing and self-questioning.
4. Student reads the sentences, paraphrases the information and generates a question from the facts.
5. Continue to read, paraphrase and generate questions to the end of the text.
6. Discuss with the student what he recalls as the main facts within the text.
7. These points are noted down as part of the assessment of his recall of the facts. (The points are compared with the actual key points of the text.)

Appendix 2

Fry Readability Chart

Sample analysis of Reading Material (100 words selected from the body of the text)

	Text Title and subject.	Number of sentences in 100 words.	Number of syllables in 100 words.	Estimated grade level.
Lesson 1	Before the Adventure Began. SOSE	4.5	134	Year 8
Lesson 2	Sailing and the Portuguese. SOSE	5.5	135	Year 7
Lesson 3	Diaz and da Gama SOSE	6	142	Year 8
Lesson 4	Columbus and the New World. SOSE	8	150	Year 8
Lesson 5	Conquest and Empire. SOSE	5	150	Year 9
Lesson 6	Around the world with Magellan. SOSE	6	138	Year 7
Lesson 7	Ecosystems SCI	8	160	Year 9
Lesson 8	Physical Attributes of an Ecosystem. SCI	5.5	140	Year 8
Lesson 9	Food Chains and Food Webs: Interactions of Life. SCI	5.5	149	Year 9
Lesson 10	Effects of Human Civilization on the Ecosystem. SCI	6	150	Year 9

Note:

The readability of some of the science material was quite high because of the language used in this subject. It is worth noting though that the student was quite familiar with many of the scientific terms used and didn't have the decoding problems that I initially anticipated.

Appendix 4

Before-reading questions.

- What is my purpose for reading?
- What do I already know?
- What do I think I will find out?

Appendix 5

Question Starters

Who?
What?
Where?
When?
Why?
How?

Appendix 6

Resources Used In the Lessons

- *Phillips, G. Rickard, G. Johnstone, K.* (2002) Longman Outcomes: SCI 2 Longman
- *Ciavarella, G. & Calandra, A.* (1997) SOSE 2: Studies of Society & Environment Jacaranda

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