Procedure

Each session had a focus of substituting words with synonyms. The first sessions began with replacing one word in a sentence, e.g., Sam and John went along the path. The substituted word had to reflect the meaning of the sentence. All students had a turn and a vocabulary list was built up for the underlined word. The students then had to retell the sentence in their own words, changing as many of the words in the sentence as possible. These sentences were recorded on the chalkboard. A discussion about the sentences followed and students commented on which sentence they thought was best and why.

The students were asked to verbalize the strategy they were practising. “Look at the sentence and read it. Think about what the sentence said. Cover the sentence and then say it in my own words.”

This strategy was practised each day moving from a word, to a sentence and then to a paragraph; each to be transposed into their own words. The students were asked to verbalize the strategy they were practising before they read.

The nine teaching sessions were held over a three week period at about twenty-five minutes per session. Where possible they were held on consecutive days.

Each day anecdotal notes were made and the students recorded their responses in a book allocated for the sessions.

Session 1 – Find a synonym for a given single word. Words listed. From a sentence on the chalkboard, the verb is to be replaced by a synonym ensuring the meaning of the sentence remains. Each student takes a turn. Teacher models the retell of a sentence Orally, students retell the whole sentence replacing as many words as possible, still ensuring that the meaning remains. Students record their own sentence.

Session 2 – Recall what happened during the previous session. Replace the verb with a synonym. Retell the whole sentence changing as many words as possible, orally and the teacher transcribes the sentences on the chalkboard. Students record their own sentence.

Session 3 - Students verbalize the strategy ‘What I need to do when I am reading’. Using a fiction text , students read a sentence, cover it and retell it in their own words, changing as many words as possible.

Session 4, 5, 6, 7 - Verbalize the strategy. Students read a non-fiction text a sentence at a time and paraphrase it. At the end of the paragraph discuss what the main idea is.

Session 8 – Retell the passage from the previous session. Verbalize the strategy – paraphrasing. Use a non-fiction text for reading – paraphrase sentence by sentence orally. Students write one sentence to summarize the paragraph.

Session 9 - The approach was enriched by asking the students to read a paragraph of a fiction text, think of the picture in their minds about the text and then draw that picture and label it with relevant words. From this they were to retell the paragraph in their own words in writing. This approach was tried in the hope that the language in the retelling would have a better flow than previously for some students and would make the task easier.
The first paragraph was read by all students and discussed. Each sentence was paraphrased and then students illustrated the paragraph and recorded what it was about. The second paragraph was to be read by the students to themselves, paraphrasing each sentence. They then had to illustrate the paragraph and retell and record it.

**Session 10** – Assessment – Torch test Grasshoppers  
**Session 11** – Assessment – Comprehension questions with multiple choice answers.  
**Session 12** – Assessment - PROBE

**TEACHING STRATEGIES**

Teaching students who have difficulty in comprehending written text to paraphrase enables them to gain a deeper understanding of what they are reading. Literal comprehension improves as does inferential.

The six children who were involved in this study were from the middle years of the primary school; three girls from Year 4 and two boys and one girl from Year 3. They were taken as a small group within the two-hour literacy block within my classroom. Each group session lasted for around twenty-five minutes. Students were required to record what they had done orally in the session or to repeat the process using the next part of the text without further direction.

The teaching unit will improve the use of paraphrasing strategies while reading to increase sentence level comprehension, which in turn will enable students to phrase paragraphs, locating the main idea. Paraphrasing sentences makes the reader aware of each sentence and its meaning and how it fits with the next sentence.

MLOTP model –  
Sentence level comprehension.  
Topic level – recognition of main ideas in a paragraph.

Prior to beginning a session with the control group, the strategy of paraphrasing is introduced to the whole class on a single word level – finding synonyms for a single word, e.g. then. The teacher lists these words on the chalkboard.

**Lesson 1**

1. Group given a word, each provides a synonym.  
2. Teacher writes a sentence on the chalkboard. E.g. ‘Sam and John went along the beach.’ Replace the verb went. Each student has at least one turn and these words are listed on a chart.  
3. The teacher models paraphrasing the whole sentence orally. Each student then has a turn of paraphrasing the sentence and the teacher records this on the board.  
4. When all students have had their turn, discuss which sentence has the most words changed. Tick the words that have been changed but provide a clear meaning of the given sentence. ‘What did you do when you read the sentence?’ Responses – ‘Changed it into our own words, used synonyms’  
5. The students then record their synonym suggestions and their
Lesson 2

1. Discuss the strategy and students then verbalize it. Tell yourself what you have read. Try to change as many words as you can.
2. A sentence is written on the chalkboard. The verb in the sentence is to be exchanged for a synonym, e.g. John said that he would not go to the party. Students provide words and these are listed on a chart.
3. John said, ‘I will not go to the party’. Students offer synonyms for ‘said’ in the context of the new sentence.
4. A student provides a sentence to be changed into other words but with the same meaning. The children in Year 3 ran races at the sports yesterday. The students orally paraphrase the sentence in turn and the teacher records it on the chalkboard. Discuss which sentence changes the most words and still retains the meaning. Students return to their seats and record their sentence.

Lesson 3

1. Students articulate the strategy they are to practise. Encourage think aloud procedure.
2. Using a simple text, read and paraphrase a sentence at a time. Students take turns retelling the sentence orally.
3. Complete this procedure for a whole paragraph and then ask what the main idea of the paragraph is.

Lesson 4

1. Students articulate the paraphrasing strategy.
2. Provide a single word for replacement, each student is to have one turn.
3. A sentence is written on the chalkboard for students to put into their own words.
4. Read a simple text, e.g. Small Moon, Big Sun, “The News Day and Night”
5. Using the first sentence of the article, read and then retell orally. Work through the paragraph with this method.
6. Read the first sentence in the second paragraph. Students then retell the sentence and record it.

Lesson 5

1. Students articulate the paraphrasing strategy.
2. Read a simple text e.g. Longest and Shortest from ‘The News Day and Night’. First paragraph – read each sentence. What does the sentence say? Put it into your own words.
3. What is the main idea of the paragraph? Discuss.
4. Students record the main idea of the paragraph.

Lesson 6

1. Students articulate what you do to help you understand what is being read.
2. Read text, e.g. In the dark of the night, ‘The News, Day and Night’. Paraphrase each sentence orally.
3. From listening to each other, the students then say what the main idea of the paragraph is.
4. Read the second paragraph together.
5. Re-read the article individually. Paraphrase each sentence.
6. Record the main idea of the paragraph.
Lesson 7
1. Review In the dark of the night, from Lesson 6. Students say what the main idea is and this is recorded on the chalkboard.
2. Re-read the article.
3. Review the main ideas recorded on the chalkboard. Discuss which main idea best describes the article.
Throughout the session, students articulate the strategy, ‘When I am reading I put the sentences into my own words. I ask myself, “What does the sentence mean?”’

Lesson 8
1. Retell the passage from Lesson 7.
2. The students verbalize the paraphrasing strategy.
4. The students retell the sentence in their own words orally. The teacher records it on the chalkboard. Which sentence has changed the most words? Does each sentence fit with the meaning of the original sentence? Each changed word in a sentence is ticked. Encourage the students to rearrange the sentence structure after the teacher has modelled it.

Lesson 9
1. Students retell paragraph one, Bronson, in their own words.
2. Verbalize the strategy they are to employ – read, ask what the reading is about, say it in your own words.
3. Question students about the picture they have in their minds about Bronson in the first paragraph.
4. Illustrate paragraph one and write some key words on the picture.
5. Retell, in writing, what paragraph one is about.
6. Read paragraph 2 twice, using the paraphrasing strategy whilst reading.
7. Illustrate paragraph 2, using key words.
8. Retell paragraph 2.