# EFFECT OF INSTRUCTION IN GOAL-SETTING ON SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION ACHIEVEMENT IN JOS SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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## Abstract

The study aimed at identifying the extent to which students were aware of goal-setting strategies that could enhance their reading comprehension achievement using expository passages. The research adopted a quasiexperimental design, specifically the non-randomized pre-test post-test design. The sample consisted of 71 Senior Secondary 11 (SS2) students, drawn from two randomly selected secondary schools in Jos South Local GovernmentArea ofPlateau State. The experimental group was taught using goal-setting strategiesfor seven weeks. The comprehension passages tested the comprehension levels' skills, main idea identification skills, and the summarization skills. The data collected were analysed using the independent t-test, and the output of the analysis was shown using the statistical package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21. The results of the study were tested at 0.05 level of significance and indicated that after intervention, the students acquired the skills of answering comprehension questions, main idea identification, and summary making using expository passages. It is therefore recommended that in every reading comprehension lesson, students should be guided to set goals for reading. The students should be assisted to identify the main ideas in evay reading, and organise the main ideas to make summaries from the entire text. English teachers. should also bear in mind that the overall goal of teaching reading is to develop independent readers. They should

therefore strive to be grounded in goal-settingstrategies ' techniques themselves, in order to help students make the transitionfrom teacher dependence to independent readers. This would enable all students to acquire the skill ofgoal-setting strategies. It would also develop a generation of critical thinkers who would be able to function adequately in a world that is technically driven.

## INTRODUCTION

Reading is an interactive process that goes on between the reader and the reading material and it demands that the reader uses knowledge, skills and strategies to construct meaning from what is read. The ultimate goal of this demand is comprehension for readers. Comprehension involves all the elements ofthe reading process working together to create an aggregate ofthe text for the reader. Reading is not a passive exercise rather as readers read they generate a mental representation of the passage, which serves as an evolving framework for understanding the subsequent parts ofthe reading. As they read further, they test this evolving meaning, monitor their understanding, and pay attention to the inconsistencies which arise as they interact with the reading. Ifthey notice that they are losing the meaning as they read on, they can draw on a variety of skills and strategies to readjust their understandings. They come to terms with purposes that guided their reading, taking a stance toward the text, and responding to the ideas that take shape in the conversation between them and the reading material.

In truth, reading comprehension leads students to academic and life achievements, and government has emphasised the need for credit in English language for students' admission into the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. However, research has shown that reading remains a challenge to many students (Unoh, 1995; Umolu, 1997&1998; Duzer, 1999; Oyetunde & Muodumogu, 1999, Steve, 2000; Vaeiz, 2001). Most students cannot read strategically because they lack the ability to use prior knowledge, set purpose, monitor understanding, annotate text, make notes and evaluate reading. Such students definitely do not have sufficient vocabularies to

relate their ideas to words in the passages. This is a challenge which demands students to readjust the ways they handle reading.

In the light of the above, therefore, all emphases during reading exercises should be to acquire comprehension skills. These skills include the understanding of comprehension at the literal, inferential and critical levels, identifying main ideas and summarizing reading.

The activities stated above demand students to read with personal determination and motivation that would enable them master reading as an acquired skill, a skill to secure, grow and sharpen. To achieve this, every attempt to read must begin with goal-setting. Goal-setting on reading comprehension according to Woolfolk (2007), is the guided plan that motivates effective comprehension activities. To read strategically, students should ensure that they set clear, specific and attainable goals by using goal-setting strategies such as: activating background knowledge, purpose setting, monitoring understanding, annotating / note making, and evaluation of text. Goal-setting on reading can be made relevant when it is viewed in three consecutive stages, namely: pre-reading, during-reading and afterreading.

To achieve pre-reading activities, students should have goal-setting on what they intend to achieve before the actual act ofreading a text begins in order to make the process of reading more comprehensible. This may include for example, the application of the necessary background information, where a student recalls what he knows about the topic of a text before reading, for the purpose of learning the content as fully as possible and linking the new content to prior knowledge. At the beginning stage, purpose can be set by the teacher, but as the reader becomes more matured, this purpose setting or awareness-raising strategy, can be left to the readers. During reading, students should follow activities that encourage active reading. These consist ofmonitoring, reacting, questioning, arguing, evaluating, and placing a text within one's own experience. As regards to after-reading, some authors such as Fitzgerald (2008); Uron (2005); Duke and Pearson (2001); Vaezi (2001); and Eskey in (Duzer, 1999) have observed that goal-setting is essential to making readers

good and active. Students should note that post-reading activities almost always depend on the purpose of reading and the type of information extracted from the text. For real, the purpose ofreading is not to memorize an author's point ofview, but rather to see into another's mind, or to mesh new information into what one already knows.

It is obvious that for goal-setting on reading comprehension to be effective, students must work with their teachers to determine and understand their reading success. The regular method of asking and answering questions used by many teachers cannot necessarily help students to become strategic readers. The required instructional procedures should be able to permit a link between text concepts and past experiences, and set up in the minds of the students, appropriate expectations about the language and content ofthe reading materials.

From the foregoing, it is clear that reading comprehension is a purposeful and goal-oriented activity. It is not a straightforward process of lifting words off the pages ofbooks. It is a complex process ofproblem solving in which the reader works to make sense of a passage not just from the words and sentences on the pages, but also from the ideas, memories, and knowledge evoked by those words and sentences (Ruddell & Unrau, 2006). Although at first glance reading may seem to be passive, solitary, and simple, it is in truth active, populated by a rich mix ofvoices and views those of the author, of the reader, and of others the reader has heard, read about, and otherwise encountered throughout life. Because of the active nature of reading, students' attention should always be based on what they are able to understand and learn before reading, during reading, and what they know and believe after reading. Instead of the daunting task of students' inability to express what they read, they should be able to develop a plan before reading, monitor their understanding and 'fixup' strategies when meaning breaks down during reading, and extract useful information from the text after reading. It is against this background that this study investigates the effects of instruction in goal-setting on students' reading comprehension achievement,

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

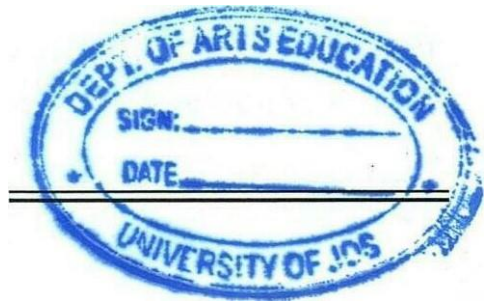
Comprehension is one area that is particularly problematic to students in Nigerian schools. The reasons for the widespread of comprehension problems in schools are many, but two particularly merit attention in this study. These are ignorance of what reading is, and poor teaching methodology. Many schools do not readily appreciate the differences between teaching English, and teaching comprehension, and so do not adequately represent comprehension on the time table. On the issue ofpoor teaching methodology, a fair assessment is that most teachers do not seem to know what to do to help students set goals to enhance comprehension.

Students do not only need to understand comprehension skills, they also need to have the awareness of goal-setting strategies. It is as a result of the breakdown on this fact that many students are not strategic readers. And it is the urgency to remedy the problem that motivated the researcher into this study.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of instruction in goalsetting on senior secondary school students' reading comprehension achievement in Jos South Local GovernmentArea, Plateau State. The specific objectives ofthe study were to:

1. Find out the extent to which instruction in goal-setting will improve students' ability to answer literal, inferential and critical questions from expository passages.
2. Determine the extent to which instruction in goal-setting will improve students' ability to identify main ideas from expository passages.
3. Find out the extent to which instruction in goal-setting will influence students' ability to summarise expository passages.




RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions were used in the study:

1. To what extent will instruction in goal-setting influence students' ability of literal comprehension understanding using expository passages?
2. To what extent will instruction in goal-setting improve students' ability of inferential comprehension understanding using expository passages?
3. To what extent will instruction in goal-setting improve students' ability of critical comprehension understanding using expository passages?
4. To what extent will instruction in goal-setting improve students' ability to identify main ideas from expository passages.
5. To what extent to will instruction in goal-setting influence students' ability to make summaries from expository passages.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

I . There is no significant difference between the literal comprehension posttest mean scores of students exposed to goal-setting instruction and those who were not.

2. There is no significant difference between the inferential comprehension post-test mean scores of students exposed to goal-setting instruction and those who were not.

3. There is no significant difference between the critical comprehension post test mean scores of students exposed to goal-setting instruction and those who were not.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used quasi experimental design that adopts non-randomized pretest post-test control group. The design entails comparing a group that has received training with a group that has not received such training for the purpose of establishing the effect of the training.

The population consisted of all the 18 government senior secondary schools in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State with a total population of2, 180 students, from where only two schools (GSSS Hwolshe, and GSSS Giring), were drawn.

The sample was made up of 71 SS2 students taken from the two government secondary schools used for the study. Thirty five (35) students were drawn from GSSS Hwolshe, and 36 students were drawn from GSSS Giring. One of the two schools was assigned to the experimental group, and the other to the control group.

The sampling technique used in the study was the simple random sampling. This was used for the sampling of the two schools that were used for the study, from the eighteen senior secondary schools in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State. The same technique was also used for assigning the two schools chosen for the study into the experimental and control groups.

Three instruments were used for data collection in this study. They were the Comprehension Levels Skills Test (CLST); the Main Idea Identification Skills Test (MIIST); and the Summarization Skills Test (SST). The passages were developed by the researcher and were similar to the passages in the "Intensive and Progressive English text books enlisted for use in the senior secondary schools core curriculum

in Plateau State. The passages developed were within the environmental background and reading/linguistic levels of the students. The passages helped to eliminate any form of interference due to familiarity with comprehension passages in the study by the students.

The passages tested the reading comprehension levels skills (literal, inferential, and critical), main idea identification skills, and summarization skills of the respondents. The tests were essential in the following ways: they tested the students' understanding of goal-setting strategies, and the students' ability to make the skills of goal-setting application a life skill. The comprehension levels skill test passage was used to train the students on the literal, inferential, and critical understanding of comprehension questions. Here, instruction involved explanations on how the students could:

1. Give answers that required reading 'on the lines'.
2. Give answers that required reading 'between the lines'.
3. Give answers that required reading 'beyond the lines'.

Main idea identification skills test passage instruction was based on distinguishing between the most important and the least important information in the passage, and on how to note main theme the author has put across. Summarization skill test passage instruction stressed that the students should read a passage carefully, process information from the passage, and give a concise generalization of the information in their own word.

The tests were developed following these steps: the preliminary steps, actual steps, and evaluation steps.

The preliminary steps: The researcher identified the objectives which the test were to measure and gave attention to the development of the students on the objectives so identified.

The actual steps: This involved the training development where the researcher would model, interact, question, use background knowledge, set purpose, to drive in the transformation needed to enhance students to read strategically.

The evaluation steps: The activities at this stage involved helping the students to interact with each passage, and demonstrate the understanding by carrying out the given instructions using the appropriate strategies.

The research validated the instruments. Validation of instruments refers to the assessment of the extent to which an instrument measures what it proposed to measure, (Awotunde & Ugodulunwa 2004); Moskal & Leydens, (2000). To validate the instruments, the researcher gave them to experts in the fields of English Education, and Test and Measurement in the Faculty of Education, University of Jos to assist in the evaluation of the suitability of the instrument. Determining the reliability of the instrument was done using Cronbach alpha. The researcher chose Cronbach alpha for the reason that it can be used for both binary-type and large-scale data.

Pre-test was administered to all the students before the training exercise to ascertain the level of their understanding of goal-setting strategies on reading. The three comprehension passages were used by the students in the experimental group to receive training on the comprehension levels skills, main idea identification skills, and summarization skills for seven weeks. Post-test was administered on all the students after the last week of the training exercise to ascertain the impact of the training on those in the experimental group. After the tests were taken, the researcher compared the scores obtained by both groups for final analysis.

The results of the analysis of the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance, and presented using five tables. The test scores obtained by the students were computed using t-test analysis, and the output of the analysis was shown using the statistical package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21. It should be noted generally that "P" (probability) is significant if it is less than 0.05, and that independent t-Test is a test used in assessment when two groups are used for collecting data from two variables.

1. Goal-setting instruction and students' ability to answer comprehension questions

There is no significant difference between literal comprehension post-test mean scores of students exposed to goal-setting instruction and those not exposed.

Table 1: t-Test for the Post-test on Literal Comprehension

| Groups | N | Mean | Sd | | t-cal | Sig | decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | 35 | 12.57 | 3.09 | 69 | 3.36 | 0.001 | significant |
| Control | 36 | 10.06 | 3.22 | | | | |

The data on the literal comprehension post-test mean scores of the students exposed to goal-setting instruction and those not exposed was analysed. The SPSS output of the analysis showed that those exposed to goal-setting instruction had a mean score of 12.57, a standard deviation of3.09, while the control group had a mean score of 10.06 and a standard deviation of 3.22. This showed that there was a difference in performances between the experimental group and the control group. In addition, the calculated value oft was 3.36, while the p-value was 0.001.

Since the p-value was less than 0.05, it meant that there was less than 1% chance that the difference between the experimental group and the control group occurred by chance. Therefore, we rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there was a significant difference between the literal comprehension post-test mean scores of the students exposed to goal-setting instruction and those not exposed.

## 2. Goal-setting instruction and students' ability to answer inferential comprehension questions

There is no significant difference between inferential comprehension post-test mean scores of students exposed to goal-setting instruction and those not exposed.

Table 2: t-Test for the Post-test on Inferential Comprehension

| Groups | N | mean | Sd | df | t-cal | sig | decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | 35 | 7.14 | 1.83 | 69 | 8.76 | 0.000 | significant |
| Control | 36 | 2.39 | 2.65 | | | | |

The data on the inferential comprehension post-test mean scores of the students exposed to goal-setting instruction and those not exposed was analysed. The SPSS output of the analysis showed that those exposed to goal-setting instruction had a mean score of 7.14 and a standard deviation of 1.83, while the control group had a mean score of 2.39 and a standard deviation of 2.65. This showed that there was a difference in performances between the experimental group and the control group. In addition, the calculated value oft was 8.76, while the p-value was 0.000.

Since the p-value was less than 0.05, it meant that there was less than 1 % chance that the difference between the experimental group and the control group occurred by chance. Therefore, we rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there was a significant difference between the inferential comprehension post-test mean scores of the students exposed to goal-setting instruction and those not exposed.

## 3. Goal-setting instruction and students' ability to answer comprehension questions

There is no significant difference between critical comprehension post-test mean scores of students exposed to goal-setting instruction and those not exposed.

Table 3: t-Test for the Post-test on Critical Comprehension

| Groups | N | Mean | Sd | df | t-cal | sig | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | 35 | 5.20 | 2.07 | 69 | 8.04 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Control | 36 | 1.22 | 2.09 | | | | |

The data on the critical comprehension post-test mean scores of the students exposed to goal-setting instruction and those not exposed was analysed. The SPSS output of the analysis showed that those exposed to goal-setting instruction had a mean score of 5.20 and a standard deviation of2.07, while the control group had a mean score of 1.22 and a standard deviation of 2.09. This showed that there was a difference in performances between the experimental group and the control group. In addition, the calculated value oft was 8.04, while the p-value was 0.000.

Since the p-value was less than 0.05, it meant that there was less than 1% chance that the difference between the experimental group and the control group occurred by chance. Therefore, we rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there was a significant difference between the critical comprehension post-test mean scores of the students exposed to goal-setting instruction and those not exposed.

4. Goal-setting instruction and students' ability to identify main ideas There is no significant difference between the main idea identification post test mean scores of students exposed to goal-setting instruction and those not exposed.

Table 4: t-Test for the Post-test on Main Idea Identification

| Groups | N | mean | Sd | df | t-cal | sig | decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | 35 | 16.43 | 5.69 | 69 | 6.97 | 0.000 | Sig |
| Control | 36 | 7.67 | 4.87 | | | | |

The data on the main idea identification post-test mean scores of the students exposed to goal-setting instruction and those not exposed was analysed. The SPSS output of the analysis shows that those exposed to goal-setting instruction had a mean score of 16.43 and a standard deviation of 5.69, while the control group had a mean score of 7.67 and a standard deviation of 4.87. This shows that there is a difference in performances between the experimental group and the control group. In addition, the calculated value oft was 6.96, while the p-value was 0.000.

Since the p-value was less than 0.05, it meant that there was less than 1% chance that the difference between the experimental group and the control group occurred by chance. Therefore, we rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there was a significant difference between the main idea identification post-test mean scores of the students exposed to goal-setting instruction and those not exposed.

5. Goal-setting instruction and students' ability to make summaries

There is no significant difference between the summarization post-test mean scores of students exposed to goal-setting instruction and those not exposed.

Table 5: t-Test for the Post-test on summarization

| Groups | N | mean | Sd | df | t-cal | Sig | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | 35 | 18.37 | 5.13 | 69 | 7.98 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Control | 36 | 9.11 | 4.64 | | | | |

The data on the literal summarization post-test mean scores of students exposed to goal-setting instruction and those not exposed was analysed. The SPSS output of the analysis shows that those exposed to goal-setting instruction had a mean score of 18.37 and a standard deviation of 5.13, while the control group had a mean score of 9.11 and a standard deviation of 4.64. This showed that there was a difference in performances between the experimental group and the control group. In addition, the calculated value oft was 7.98, while the p-value was 0.000.

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, it meant that there is less than 1% chance that the difference between the experimental group and the control group occurred by chance. Therefore, we rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there was a significant difference between the summarization post-test mean scores of the students exposed to goal-setting instruction and those not exposed.

## SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

This section contained the details of the major findings of the study after the training of the students and a careful analysis of the data collected.

1. Ability to answer comprehension questions: The students actually applied the skills obtained from the instructions of the study to answer the comprehension questions at the three levels (literal, inferential and critical), as evidenced in the results obtained from the experimental group.

On the other hand, the pre-test and the post-test performances of the students in the control group showed that their comprehension understanding tended to be fairer at the literal level. This involved a faithful reproduction of what was explicitly stated in the passage, than at the inferential and critical levels.

2. The results also suggested that the study's instruments, programme design, and treatment/administration of tests were suitable, adequate and suffcient to enable the students acquire the critical goal-setting strategies for a better comprehension of

reading. It showed that applying strategies to reading lessons is vital to reading achievement.

3. The findings of the study have supported the recommendation of instruction in goal-setting as an alternative teaching method to the different methods of comprehension teaching. This indicated that the instruments and the programme have the potentials of contributing meaningfully to knowledge and would therefore cover the worrisome gap of the students' inability to read strategically.

## CONCLUSION

Reading comprehension demands that the reader uses knowledge, skills and strategies to construct meaning from what is read. On this note, teachers should be grounded in goal-setting strategies' techniques themselves, and be able to motivate the students to acquire the goal-setting strategies that will improve their reading.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Students should start every reading activity with goal-setting.
2. Students should identify the key ideas in every reading, and use the key ideas to make the summary of the entire text.
3. Students should give answers to comprehension questions by using the information explicitly stated in the passage and use their prior knowledge, and evaluative judgements to show understanding at the literal, inferential, and critical levels.
4. Students should use the instructional steps in this study to explore other goal setting strategies and comprehension skills not explored in the study.

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