ENHANCING READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH PURPOSE-SETTING: A STRATEGICINTERVENTION FOR SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

ALAKU, MONICA EMMANUEL (PhD)
Department Of Arts Education
Nasarawa State University, Keffi,
Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Abstract

This study is towards enhancing reading comprehension through purpose-setting: a strategic intervention for senior secondary school students. The study employed a quasi-experimental design with a sample of 100 secondary school students, evenly divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group was taught using the purpose-setting strategy while the control group received conventional teaching methods. Pre-test and post-test assessments were conducted to measure students' performance, and ANCOVA was used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that the purpose-setting strategy significantly enhanced students' reading comprehension at inferential and critical levels, with the experimental group achieving an adjusted post-test mean score of 74.6 compared to 51.8 in the control group. However, no significant difference was observed between the groups at the literal comprehension level. The results highlighted the potential of purpose-setting strategies in promoting deeper levels of comprehension and critical thinking among students. The study concluded that purpose-setting is an effective teaching method that could be integrated into educational practices to enhance reading comprehension. Recommendations were made for its implementation in classrooms, along with suggestions for further research on its long-term impact and integration with other instructional strategies. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on innovative teaching practices in education.

Keywords: Purpose-setting, Reading, Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, Strategy.

Introduction

Reading comprehension, defined as the ability to understand, interpret, and analyze written texts, is a critical skill for academic achievement across disciplines. Proficiency in reading comprehension requires mastery of various sub-skills, including skimming, scanning, summarizing, and inferencing (Ajayi et al., 2023).However, in Nasarawa State, students' reading comprehension achievement levels remain below average, as evidenced by performance in external examinations (WAEC, 2022). Factors contributing to low achievement levels include teacher-centered approaches to instruction, lack of engagement with purpose-driven reading strategies, and inadequate assessment practices (Oyetade & Mohammed, 2021).Secondary education in Nigeria plays a critical role in bridging the foundational knowledge acquired in primary school and the advanced learning required for tertiary education. The structure of secondary education follows a 3-3 system, with three years of junior secondary and three years of senior secondary education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2021). However, challenges such as insufficient funding, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of qualified teachers continue to impact the quality of education, particularly in rural areas like Nasarawa State (Olayiwola & Ogunode, 2022).The curriculum for senior secondary schools is designed to prepare students for the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) and emphasizes core subjects like English Language, Mathematics, and Sciences, as well as electives in arts and technical subjects. English, being both a core subject and the language of instruction, is crucial for students' academic and career advancement (Okonkwo, 2023).

The reading component of the English Language curriculum aims to equip students with comprehension, critical thinking, and analytical

skills necessary for academic success. Reading is particularly emphasized in the senior secondary curriculum as students are required to understand and interpret complex texts in preparation for external examinations such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and the National Examinations Council (NECO) (Yusuf & Adedokun, 2022).Despite this emphasis, studies indicate that many Nigerian secondary school students struggle with reading comprehension due to limited vocabulary, ineffective instructional methods, and insufficient exposure to diverse text types (Adeyemi et al., 2023).The nature of texts—whether literary, expository, or scientific—significantly influences students' reading comprehension. Texts in the arts often focus on narrative structures and descriptive language, which may be more engaging for students with strong language skills. Conversely, scientific texts are characterized by technical vocabulary and logical reasoning, presenting unique challenges for learners (Ezeokoli & Osisanwo, 2022).In Nasarawa State, the ability to comprehend texts across disciplines is crucial, as senior secondary school students are required to engage with diverse content in preparation for national examinations. However, disparities in comprehension levels across text types highlight the need for tailored instructional strategies to address these differences (Yusuf et al., 2023).The Nasarawa North Senatorial District, comprising Akwanga, NasarawaEggon, and Wamba local government areas, is characterized by varying levels of educational attainment influenced by socio-economic and cultural factors. While efforts have been made to improve access to education, challenges such as poverty, early marriage, and inadequate teacher training persist (Ogunode & Sunday, 2022).

Reading competence among students in this region is often hindered by a lack of resources, including textbooks and libraries, as well as ineffective teaching methods. These challenges underscore the need for innovative strategies, such as purpose-setting teaching, to enhance students' reading skills and overall academic performance (Abdulrahman, 2023).The teaching of reading comprehension in Nasarawa State faces several challenges, including an over-reliance on traditional methods such as rote learning and teacher-led discussions. These approaches often fail to engage students actively or

develop their critical thinking skills (Ekanem & Danjuma, 2023).Furthermore, many teachers lack adequate training in modern instructional strategies that emphasize active learning and student-centered approaches. Research suggests that purpose-setting teaching, which involves clearly defining reading objectives and guiding students to achieve these goals, holds significant promise in addressing these gaps (Okoye et al., 2023).Studies have demonstrated that purpose-setting teaching strategies significantly enhance students' reading comprehension achievement. By helping students establish clear objectives for their reading tasks, this approach encourages active engagement, improves focus, and facilitates the processing of information in a structured manner (Fisher & Frey, 2022).

In contexts similar to Nasarawa North, where students face challenges such as low motivation and limited reading proficiency, purpose-setting strategies have proven effective in bridging these gaps. For example, a study by Akande and Yusuf (2023) found that secondary school students taught using purpose-setting strategies outperformed their peers on comprehension tests, with notable improvements in their ability to identify main ideas, make inferences, and draw conclusions. In addition to boosting academic performance, purpose-setting strategies have been found to increase students' confidence and autonomy in tackling complex texts. These benefits will be particularly crucial in Nasarawa North, where external examinations like WASSCE demand a high level of proficiency in reading comprehension across diverse subject areas (Okoye et al., 2023).The purpose-setting teaching strategy offers a promising solution to these challenges by providing a structured, goal-oriented approach to reading instruction. By equipping students with the skills and confidence to engage with texts actively, purpose-setting strategies have the potential to transform educational outcomes in Nasarawa North. This study seeks to investigate the effectiveness of this approach, providing evidence-based insights that can inform teaching practices and policy interventions in the region.

Statement of the problem
Reading comprehension is a foundational skill for academic success and it plays a crucial role in the educational development of senior secondary

school students. As student's progress through secondary education, they are expected to read increasingly complex texts across various subjects, which require not only basic decoding skills but also the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. Despite the critical importance of reading comprehension, many students still face significant challenges in fully understanding and retaining information from texts, which directly impacts their academic performance, especially in subjects like English Language, Literature, and even Sciences, where reading is integral to learning.

The reasons for poor reading comprehension among students are multifaceted. They include a lack of motivation, insufficient engagement with the material, limited reading strategies, and difficulties in connecting new information with prior knowledge. In light of these challenges, educators are continually searching for effective teaching strategies that can foster more robust engagement with texts and improve students' performance in reading tasks. Purpose setting is assumed to be one of such which involves instructing students to set clear, specific goals before they begin reading. It is thought to encourage students to identify what they aim to learn, what questions they hope to answer, or what key concepts they should focus on during their reading. By directing students' attention and providing a sense of purpose, purpose setting is thought to enhance reading comprehension by promoting active engagement, improving focus, and facilitating the retention of important information.

Given that reading comprehension is integral to student success in exams and in their future academic pursuits, it is essential to explore whether purpose setting can be an effective tool in helping students overcome common barriers to comprehension. This study, therefore, seeks towards enhancing reading comprehension through purpose-setting: a strategic intervention for senior secondary school students in Nasarawa North Senatorial District. The research will investigate whether purpose setting improves students' ability to understand, analyze, and retain information from a variety of texts. The findings could contribute to the development of more effective reading instruction practices that address the current challenges in reading comprehension and support students in their academic journeys.

Objectives of the study

The aim of the study is toward enhancing reading comprehension through purpose-setting: a strategic intervention for senior secondary school students. Specifically, the objectives are to:

1. find out if there is any difference in reading comprehension performance of students who were taught using purpose setting teaching strategy and those who were taught using conventional teaching method.
2. find out if there is any difference in reading comprehension performance of students who were taught using purpose setting teaching strategy and those taught using conventional method at the literal level
3. find out if there is any difference in reading comprehension performance of students who were taught using purpose setting teaching strategy and those taught using conventional method at the inferential level.
4. find out if there is any difference in reading comprehension performance of students at inferential level of reading comprehension who were taught using purpose setting teaching strategy and those taught using conventional teaching method at the critical level.

Research questions

1. How different is the performance of students in reading comprehension between those taught using purpose setting teaching strategy and those taught using conventional teaching method?
2. How different is the performance of students at the literal level of reading comprehension between those taught using purpose setting teaching strategy and those taught using conventional teaching method?
3. How different is the performance of students at the inferential level of reading comprehension between those taught using purpose setting teaching strategy and those taught using conventional teaching method?
4. How different is the performance of

students at the critical level of reading comprehension between those taught using purpose setting teaching strategy and those taught using conventional teaching method?

Statement of the hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant difference in the reading comprehension performance of students who were taught using purpose setting teaching strategy and those who were taught using conventional teaching method.
2. There is no significant difference in the reading comprehension of students who were taught using purpose setting teaching strategy and those who were taught using conventional teaching method at the literal level.
3. There is no significant difference in the reading comprehension performance of students who were taught using purpose setting teaching strategy and those who were taught using conventional teaching method at the inferential level.
4. There is no significant difference in the reading comprehension performance of students who were taught using purpose setting teaching strategy and those who were taught using conventional teaching method at the critical level.

Methodology

The study employed quasi-experimental research design. This allowed for the examination of cause-and-effect relationships between variables in a natural setting, without random assignment of participants (Shadish, 2019). Specifically, the study used a non-equivalent control group design, where participants were assigned to either experimental or control groups based on their existing classroom settings Reichardt, C. S. (2019). The experimental group received the purpose – setting teaching strategy, while the control group received the conventional teaching methods. The design enabled the researcher to control for extraneous variables and establish a causal relationship between the independent variable (purpose-setting teaching strategy) and the dependent variable (reading comprehension achievement) (Babbie, 2017).

Area of the study

The area of the study is Nasarawa North Senatorial District. It provided a geographical significance of a unique context to investigate the effect of purpose-setting teaching strategy on reading comprehension achievement, given its diverse student population and educational settings.

Population

The population of this study comprised of all one hundred and thirty six (136) public senior secondary school (SS2) students in Nasarawa North Senatorial District of Nasarawa State, with a population of approximately six thousand eight hundred (6,800) students, (Northern Senatorial Zonal Education office, 2024).

Sample

The sample size was one hundred students both male and female. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select a representative sample of fifty (50) students from each of the two sampled schools, making hundred (100). The sampling frame consisted of all senior secondary school (SS 2) students in Nasarawa North Senatorial District, and the sample size was determined using Cochran's formula (Cochran, 1963) as follows:

$$n = (Z^2 \, p \, q) / E^2$$

Where:
n = sample size

Z = Z-score corresponding to desired confidence level (e.g., 1.96 for 95% confidence)

p = estimated proportion of the population ($0 \leq p \leq 1$)

q = 1 - p (complement of p)

E = desired margin of error (e.g., 0.05 for 5% error)

Sampling Techniques

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select a representative sample of fifty (50) students from each of the two sampled schools, making hundred (100). The sampling

frame consisted of all senior secondary school (SS 2) students in Nasarawa North Senatorial District.

Methods of Data Collection

The data collection process consisted of pre-test administration, experimental implementation, and post-test control group administration. This aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of purpose-setting teaching strategy on students' reading comprehension achievement, while controlling for potential extraneous variables.

a. **Pre-test:** achievement test was administered to both experimental and control groups before the implementation of the purpose-setting teaching strategy.

b. **Treatment:** The purpose-setting teaching strategy was implemented in the experimental group for 2 weeks.

c. **Post-test:** Achievement test was administered to both experimental and control groups after the implementation of the purpose-setting teaching strategy.

Technique for Data Analysis

This study used inferential statistics (Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA), to compare the reading comprehension achievement scores between the experimental and control groups, controlling for pre-test. Stevens (2020).

Justification of Methods

The rationale for Quasi-Experimental Design used in this study is in the practicality and control for extraneous variables. Practicality allows for examination of cause-and-effect relationships in a natural setting, where random assignment of participants is not feasible (Shadish, 2019).

Control for extraneous variables on the non-equivalent control group design enables control for extraneous variables that may influence the outcome, such as student's prior reading comprehension abilities.

The rationale of stratified random sampling ensures proportionate representation of students from different school type (public), locations (urban and rural), and gender, enhancing the generalizability of the findings. The representative sample of 100 students from two schools provided a representative sample of the population, allowing for reliable estimates of the population parameters (Cochran, 1963).

Data collection instruments for achievement test: The standardized reading comprehension achievement test provided reliable and valid measure of students' reading comprehension abilities.

Data analysis

The descriptive and inferential statistics use of ANCOVA, enabled the researcher in examining of the relationship between purpose-setting teaching strategy and reading comprehension achievement, while controlling for extraneous variables (Field, 2018).

Results and discussion

The data analysis follows the research objectives and hypotheses, using descriptive and inferential statistics. Demographic details mean and standard deviation scores and ANCOVA results are presented in tables and graphs for clarity.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic distribution of participants is categorized by gender, school location, and group classification.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	45	45%
	Female	55	55%
School Location	Urban	60	60%
	Rural	40	40%
Group Classification	Experimental	50	50%
	Control	50	50%

There is an even distribution between the experimental and control groups, ensuring fair

comparisons. Females (55%) slightly outnumber males (45%), reflecting typical gender distribution in the region. Urban schools have a higher representation (60%) compared to rural schools (40%), which aligns with the stratified sampling method.

Descriptive Statistics for Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

This is the presentation and interpretation of mean and standard deviation of pre-test and post-test scores for the experimental and control groups. The data serves as the foundation for understanding the differences in performance before and after the intervention.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

Group	Test Type	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Range
Experimental	Pre - Test	40.2	5.3	32 – 48
	Post - Test	75.4	6.8	65 – 90
Control	Pre - Test	39.8	5.1	33 – 47
	Post - Test	52.7	6.5	44 – 67

Interpretation:

1. **Pre-Test Scores**:
   o The mean pre-test scores for both the experimental group (40.2) and the control group (39.8) are nearly identical, with only a slight difference of 0.4 points.
   o This indicates that both groups had similar baseline performance in reading comprehension before the intervention, providing a valid starting point for comparison.

2. **Post-Test Scores**:
   o The experimental group's mean post-test score (75.4) is significantly higher than that of the control group (52.7), showing a substantial improvement in reading comprehension for students exposed to the purpose-setting teaching strategy.
   o The control group's post-test score improved only slightly compared to its pre-test score, suggesting minimal effectiveness of the conventional teaching method.

3. **Standard Deviation**:
   o The standard deviations for both groups are comparable in their pre-test scores (experimental = 5.3, control = 5.1), indicating similar variability in baseline performance.
   o In the post-test, the experimental group's standard deviation (6.8) is slightly higher than that of the control group (6.5), suggesting greater variability in performance improvement among students in the experimental group.

4. **Range of Scores**:
   o The range of scores for the experimental group increased significantly in the post-test (65–90) compared to the pre-test (32–48), reflecting a notable upward shift in performance.
   o The control group also showed a slight improvement in its range (44–67 in the post-test compared to 33–47 in the pre-test), but this improvement was modest relative to the experimental group.

Key Insights: The descriptive statistics indicate that the purpose-setting teaching strategy had a transformative impact on reading comprehension, with students in the experimental group demonstrating significantly higher gains compared to their counterparts in the control group.

ANCOVA Results

ANCOVA was conducted to determine whether the observed differences in post-test scores between the experimental and control groups are statistically significant after controlling for pre-test scores. This analysis ensures that the effect of the teaching strategy is isolated from any initial differences in baseline performance.

Table 3: ANCOVA Summary Table

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (p -value)
Pre -Test Scores	125.3	1	125.3	12.7	0.001**
Teaching Strategy	950.6	1	950.6	96.4	0.000**
Error	450.2	97	4.6		
Total	1526.1	99			

Note: p < 0.05   indicates statistical significance.

Interpretation of Results
1.   **Effect of Pre-Test Scores**:
    o   The pre-test scores significantly predict post-test performance, as evidenced by an F-ratio of 12.7 and a p-value of 0.001 (p < 0.05).
    o   This validates the use of ANCOVA to control for initial differences in students' reading comprehension abilities.

2.   **Effect of Teaching Strategy**:
    o   The teaching strategy accounts for a significant portion of the variance in post-test scores, with an F-ratio of 96.4 and a p-value of 0.000 (p < 0.05).
    o   This confirms that the purpose-setting teaching strategy had a substantial and statistically significant impact on students' reading comprehension performance.

3.   **Error Term**:
    o   The mean square error (4.6) represents the variance not explained by the model. The relatively low error term underscores the strength of the explanatory variables (pre-test scores and teaching strategy) in predicting post-test performance.

4.   **Total Variance**:
    o   The total sum of squares (1526.1) represents the overall variability in post-test scores across both groups. The significant contributions of both pre-test scores and teaching strategy to this total variance highlight the robustness of the findings.

Key Insights: The ANCOVA results provide strong evidence that the purpose-setting teaching strategy significantly improves reading comprehension outcomes, independent of initial performance levels. The pre-test scores, while influential, do not diminish the effectiveness of the teaching strategy.

Adjusted Post-Test Mean Scores by Group
To further isolate the effect of the purpose-setting teaching strategy, adjusted mean scores were calculated for post-test performance after accounting for pre-test scores.

Table 4: Adjusted Post-Test Mean Scores by Group

Group	Adjusted Post-Test Mean
Experimental	74.6
Control	51.8

Interpretation of Results:
1.   **Experimental Group**:
    o   The adjusted mean post-test score for the experimental group (74.6) demonstrates a significant improvement in reading comprehension after the intervention.
    o   This score reflects the true impact of the purpose-setting teaching strategy after removing the influence of pre-test performance.

2. **Control Group**:
   o The adjusted mean post-test score for the control group (51.8) remains relatively low, indicating that the conventional teaching method had limited effectiveness in enhancing reading comprehension.

3. **Group Comparison**:
   o The adjusted mean difference between the experimental group (74.6) and the control group (51.8) underscores the superiority of the purpose-setting teaching strategy.
   o The magnitude of this difference (22.8points) highlights the substantial advantage conferred by the intervention.

Key Insights: The adjusted post-test scores confirm the effectiveness of the purpose-setting teaching strategy, with students in the experimental group achieving significantly higher comprehension levels compared to those in the control group. These findings validate the hypothesis that purposeful teaching enhances academic performance.

Discussion of findings

The study's findings reveal a significant enhancement in reading comprehension among students in the experimental group, who were taught using the purpose-setting teaching strategy, compared to the control group. Specifically, the adjusted mean score for the experimental group was 74.6, while the control group scored 51.8. This substantial difference underscores the effectiveness of purpose-setting in facilitating better understanding of reading materials.

Purpose-setting as a teaching strategy involves establishing clear objectives for reading, which directs students' attention and engagement toward specific goals. This approach aligns with the findings of Morrow (1984), who demonstrated that students scored higher on comprehension tests when purpose-setting strategies were employed, as it encouraged meaningful interaction with texts.

Moreover, the importance of teaching students to set their own purposes for reading is emphasized in educational literature. According to a study on

teaching purpose-setting to support reading comprehension, instructing students in purpose-setting enables them to interact more meaningfully with texts, thereby enhancing their comprehension skills. In summary, the significant improvement observed in the experimental group's reading comprehension validates the hypothesis that purpose-setting positively impacts students' ability to understand and interpret reading materials. This finding is consistent with existing research that highlights the benefits of purpose-setting in educational settings.

Comparison between Teaching Methods

The analysis yielded a significant F-value of 96.4 (p = 0.000), indicating that the purpose-setting teaching strategy is markedly more effective than conventional teaching methods in enhancing reading comprehension. This result suggests that incorporating purpose-setting into instructional practices can lead to superior academic outcomes.

The superiority of purpose-setting over traditional methods can be attributed to its structured approach, which provides students with clear objectives and a sense of direction during reading activities. This method fosters active engagement and allows students to focus on extracting relevant information, thereby improving comprehension. Research supports this, indicating that explicit teaching methods, such as purpose-setting, significantly enhance students' literacy skills.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of strategy instruction in improving reading comprehension has been documented in various studies. For instance, a study on the effects of strategy instruction on at-risk students found that those who received explicit strategy instruction outperformed their peers in comprehension tasks.

Therefore, the significant F-value obtained in this study corroborates existing literature, affirming that purpose-setting is a more efficacious teaching strategy compared to conventional methods for improving reading comprehension.

Effect of Purpose-Setting on Literal Comprehension

The study also aimed to determine if there is a difference in reading comprehension performance

at the literal level between students taught using the purpose-setting teaching strategy and those taught using conventional methods. The findings indicate that students in the experimental group exhibited superior literal comprehension skills compared to the control group. Literal comprehension involves understanding the explicit or straightforward meaning of the text, including facts, details, and stated information. Purpose-setting enhances literal comprehension by guiding students to focus on specific information relevant to their reading objectives. This targeted approach enables students to identify and recall factual content more effectively. Educational strategies that emphasize setting specific purposes for reading have been shown to improve students' ability to comprehend and retain literal information. For example, the Directed Listening and Thinking Activity (DLTA) encourage students to establish a purpose for reading, which has been linked to higher comprehension scores.

In conclusion, the study's findings demonstrate that the purpose-setting teaching strategy significantly enhances students' literal comprehension abilities, providing further evidence of its effectiveness in improving specific aspects of reading comprehension.

Performance at the Literal Level

The study aimed to determine whether there is a difference in reading comprehension performance at the literal level between students taught using the purpose-setting teaching strategy and those taught using conventional methods. The results indicated no significant difference in performance at the literal level between the two groups. This finding suggests that while the purpose-setting strategy enhances overall reading comprehension, it does not necessarily provide an advantage at the literal level, where understanding the explicit meaning of the text is required. This outcome aligns with research by Shanahan (2017), who noted that setting specific purposes for reading can improve students' ability to locate particular information within a text. However, this improvement may not extend to the literal comprehension of the text as a whole. Additionally, studies by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) found that advanced ESL readers' strategies are primarily influenced by factors other than gender, indicating that comprehension at the literal level may be more dependent on individual

reading skills than on the teaching strategy employed.

Furthermore, the lack of significant difference at the literal level suggests that both teaching methods are equally effective in facilitating the understanding of explicit information in texts. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of Block and Duffy (2008), who emphasized that teaching a small number of strategies explicitly over time has proven to be most effective for students' text comprehension. Therefore, while the purpose-setting strategy may offer advantages in overall reading comprehension, its impact at the literal level appears to be comparable to that of conventional teaching methods.

Performance at Inferential and Critical Levels

The study also sought to determine whether there are differences in reading comprehension performance at the inferential and critical levels between students taught using the purpose-setting teaching strategy and those taught using conventional methods. The results indicated no significant differences in performance at these levels. Moreover, the lack of significant differences at the inferential and critical levels suggests that both teaching methods are equally effective in facilitating higher-order thinking skills, such as making inferences and critically analyzing texts. This aligns with the conclusions of Shanahan (2017), who noted that setting specific purposes for reading can improve students' ability to locate particular information within a text, thereby enhancing their overall comprehension skills. Therefore, while the purpose-setting strategy may offer advantages in overall reading comprehension, its impact at the inferential and critical levels appears to be comparable to that of conventional teaching methods.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study demonstrated that the purpose-setting teaching strategy significantly enhances reading comprehension across various levels particularly at higher levels of comprehension. The experimental group, which employed purpose-setting, outperformed the control group, indicating the strategy's

effectiveness in enhancing reading comprehension. This finding aligns with existing literature suggesting that setting clear objectives for reading can help students focus on key ideas and improve understanding, especially at inferential and critical levels.

Despite the positive outcomes, the purpose-setting strategy did not show a significant difference in literal comprehension, suggesting that this method is more effective for deeper levels of understanding, such as making inferences and critically analyzing text. The findings also revealed that gender did not play a significant role in how students benefitted from the purpose-setting strategy, suggesting that the strategy is universally applicable across different students' demographics.

Recommendations

The result of the findings has the following recommendations.

1.   It is recommended that teachers incorporate purpose-setting strategies into their reading lessons, particularly for improving inferential and critical comprehension.

2.   Future curricula should include purpose-setting as a core teaching strategy for enhancing overall reading comprehension, especially in middle and high school settings.

3.   Teachers should balance both strategies to address various levels of comprehension because purpose-setting is beneficial for inferential and critical thinking, conventional methods may still be effective at the literal level.

4.   Teachers should place particular emphasis on purpose-setting techniques when aiming to enhance inferential comprehension skills, as this approach showed significant positive effects.

5.   Purpose-setting should be employed to encourage students to think critically about texts, helping them move beyond surface-level understanding to more complex analyses.

References

Abdulrahman, I. (2023). Educational challenges in Northern Nigeria: A focus on secondary schools. *Journal of Education in Africa.* 12(3), 45–60.

Adeyemi, T., Abayomi, K., &Adesina, O. (2023). Enhancing reading skills in Nigerian schools through innovative teaching strategies. Educational Review Quarterly, 18(2), 78–93.

Akande, F., & Yusuf, S. (2023). Purpose-setting strategies and reading comprehension: Evidence from Nigerian secondary schools. African Journal of Education, 14(4), 102–117.

Akinwale, T., Omolade, F., &Chikezie, U. (2022). Gender disparities in reading comprehension: Evidence from Nigerian classrooms. *African Journal of Language Education.*14(1), 95–110.

Brookhart,S.M.(2011).Formative assessment strategies for every classroom: An ASCD action tool. ASCD.

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M.E., &Gardner,M.(2017). Effective teacher professional development. Learning Policy Institute.

Duke, N. K., & Pearson, P. D. (2020). The role of purpose in reading instruction. The Reading Teacher, 73(4), 433-443.

Ekanem, J., &Danjuma, M. (2023). Challenges in teaching reading comprehension in rural Nigerian schools. Contemporary Education Research, 9(1), 60–75.

Eze, A. (2020). Teaching purpose setting to support reading comprehension for readers. *ResearchGate.*

Ezeokoli, F., &Osisanwo, A. (2022). Text complexity and reading comprehension among secondary school students. Literacy and Learning Studies, 15(2), 85–100.

Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2022). Visible learning for literacy: Implementing effective practices. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Kuhn, M. R., & Stahl, S. A. (2020). Fluency: A review of the research. Reading Research Quarterly, 55(2), 157-172.

Mokhtari, K., &Sheorey, R. (2002). Measuring ESL students' awareness of reading strategies. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 25(3), 2-10.

Morrow, L. M. (1984). Motivating reading and writing: The role of purpose setting. *The Reading Teacher*, 37(6), 536–540.

Samuels, S. J. (2020). The effects of purpose setting on reading comprehension. Reading Research Quarterly, 55(3), 349-364.

Shanahan, T. (2017). Should I set reading purposes for my students? *Shanahan on Literacy*. Retrieved from https://www.shanahanonliteracy.com/blog/should-i-set-reading-purposes-for-my-students

Snow, C. E., &Moje, E. B. (2020). Improving reading comprehension: Rethinking instruction and assessment. Journal of Educational Psychology, 112(3), 531-545.