

**EFFECT OF INSTRUCTION IN READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS ON
SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS INFERENTIAL ABILITY IN
ZARIA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA**

BY

OAHMIRE, CALLISTER UMEADI

JUNE, 2011

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ZARIA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA**

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B.Ed (ABU 1989)
M.ED/TESL/50668/2005-06**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL,
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA.**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
FOR THE AWARD OF MASTERS DEGREE IN TESL**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA**

JUNE, 2011

DECLARATION

I declare that the work in the thesis entitled “Effect of Instruction in Reading Comprehension skills on Senior Secondary School Students Inferential Ability in Zaria Local Government Area” has been carried out by me in the Department of Education under the supervision of Dr (Mrs) Yusuf, H.O. and Dr (Mrs) Enesi, A.O.

The information derived from the literature had been duly acknowledged in the text and a list of references provided. No part of this thesis was previously presented for another degree or diploma at any other university.

Oahimire Callister Umeadi

Date

CERTIFICATION

This thesis entitled, THE EFFECT OF INSTRUCTION IN READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS ON SENIOR SECONDARY SHOOOL STUDENTS' INFERENTIAL ABILITY IN ZARIA LOCAL GOVERNMENT by Oahimire Callister, meets the regulation governing the award of the degree of Masters in Education, of Ahmadu Bello University and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I sincerely acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of my first supervisor, Professor I.A. Olaofe with whom the foundation for the first three chapters of this work was laid. I am grateful for his firm, but insistent direction.

In a special way, words are not enough to express my gratitude to my last two supervisors, Dr (Mrs) Yusuf, H.O; and Dr (Mrs) Enesi, A.O., for moving the work forward. I am grateful for their sincere support, direction and encouragement, when I least expected it.

I also express my sincere appreciation to all members of the proposal defence panel; Dr (Mrs) Adeniyi, Dr (Mrs) Daura and Mr Kankia, for their observations and corrections.

Same sincere appreciation goes to all members of the internal defence panel; Dr Sadiq Mohammed, and late Dr Obe, Ali for their contributions.

I am particularly grateful to Dr Matemilola R.A. for sparing his time to read through the work, pointing out his observations and suggestions.

Finally, to my dear husband Mr Godwin Oahimire, I say thank you for the moral and financial support given. Without his firm but loving support, the work could have been abandoned. I also appreciate the patience, understanding and encouragement of my beloved children in the course of this work.

To all my friends, Mr and Mrs Odidi, and Mrs Alao, Mr Jacob Idakwo, Mrs Kate Chukwu, Mrs Audu and Mrs Shaki, I am grateful for your words of encouragement; Thank you all.

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effect of instruction in reading comprehension skills on senior secondary school students' inferential ability in Zaria Local Government Area. Two groups of SS I students, experimental and control, were involved in this study. All conditions were similar in the two groups on reading comprehension skills programme of understanding figurative usage, indentifying a main idea, discovering text organization and recognizing a writer's point of new using a test instrument standardized by the researcher, test were administered to the students after the lesions. Data collected were analyzed using the mean scores and Anova statistical tools. The results indicated that the experimental group performed significantly better in their post-tests compared to the control group, it was therefore recommended that effort should be made to assist the learner achieve comprehension, a basic step to building inferential ability by teaching specific reading sub-skills, during reading comprehension lessons. On the basis of gender there is no significant difference in performance between the boys and girls scores.

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ABBREVIATION

INF	-	Inferential
WPV	-	Writer's Point of View
MI	-	Main Idea
TO	-	Text Organization
FIG.	-	Figurative
ELL	-	English Language
LGL	-	List Group Label

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. **READING COMPREHENSION:** is the ability to recognize words used in sentences and be able to read and understand them.
2. **SUB-SKILLS:** are the necessary foundational steps taken to arrive at deeper meaning/understanding.
3. **INFERENTIAL:** To have an understanding that though specific idea or knowledge of something is not directly included in a text, but it is there.
4. **ABILITY:** someone's level of skill at doing something
5. **FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE:** Are words used to create a mental picture in the mind of the reader, to see or feel from the author's perspective about a particular issue or object.
6. **MAIN IDEA:** is to say specifically the issue on the author's mind in a piece of reading Material.
7. **TEXT ORGANIZATION:** Is to be able to take a look at a reading material and be able to re-arrange the entire text in another way.
8. **POINT OF VIEW:** To be able to appreciate a story the way it is presented by the writer. Thereby not condemning it.
9. **SCAFFOLDING:** is a process of using learners' creativity in explaining difficult ideas.
10. **BACKGROUND EXPERIENCE:** Is that process that is used to help the learner connect rightly to the expected message in a reading text. For example, preview by way of asking questions.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In Nigeria, the English language as a medium for teaching and learning in schools, as well as a Lingua Franca still have a long way to go in ensuring the desired effect. Adeyanju (1987) pointed out that as a vehicular language of education in Nigeria, the slides in the standard of English are largely responsible for a falling standard of education in the country.

Banjo (1973) and Obah (1989) insist that an area of language learning that requires utmost and urgent attention is reading comprehension as this affects not only reading for pleasure, but also reading for information in content areas of study. Umolu (1988) sees the problem of low reading ability as a national crisis because of the pervasive nature of poor academic performance in higher institutions of learning nationwide. The picture painted is bleak. The annual mass failure in West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) result in English language attests to the fact that most students do not read instructions, or even questions, with sufficient comprehension. This, no doubt led to the hue and cry about the illiteracy level of the products of the primary, secondary schools, as well as tertiary institutions (Oluikpe, 1984). Agbese (1989) lamented the country's educational "investment in failure" rather than success.

In general, many factors influence the comprehension of textbooks. These include socio-cultural factors such as home background or experience at home, peer influence and value placed on reading by the society. There are also influences such as the absence of reading culture; linguistic factors such as the level of vocabulary and the syntactic and semantic difficulty of the textbooks; psychological factors such as

motivation, interest and prior knowledge and pedagogical factors such as teacher training, methods used in teaching reading and instructional materials (Odumuh,1997).

The ability to communicate clearly is as a result of clear thinking in the language. And this can only be achieved through reading. For this reason, reading is one of the most essential components of the English course. The place of reading as an invaluable skill cannot be overemphasized. Beck and Mckeown (1991) put it aptly when they remark that learning both in school and beyond, is nearly dependent on acquiring information from text. One way of doing this accurately is, by being able to read beyond the surface level. To buttress this fact, Duke, Pressley, and Hilden (2004) agreed that comprehension entails a complete web of skills and dispositions.

In Nigeria, teaching of comprehension is still viewed as the simple task of providing learners with many opportunities to read a piece of text and respond to a variety of questions. The number of correct responses provided by the learner was then taken as an indication of their level of understanding of the text (Annadale, 2005). Emphasis on comprehension sub-skills is neglected.

Research and awareness however have proven that emphasis on these are a necessary tool for the successful teaching and learning of reading comprehension. Reading instruction involves the development of skills related to the various stages of the curriculum. Classroom approaches should be concerned with reading strategies for different purposes (Williams, 1999). Reading comprehension skills at the secondary school level can be classified as: Literal – understanding literal meaning (reading the lines). This includes; Lexical meaning, grammatical meaning, answering direct reference questions and factual restatement; Inferential – inferring deeper meaning (reading between the lines). This includes; understanding figurative usage, finding main idea, discovering organization and

recognizing a writer's point of view. Evaluative – evaluating meaning and method (reading beyond the lines). This includes; separating fact from fiction, comparing different versions and assessing literary devices.

An area of concern to this study is the inferential, reading between the lines. This involves sub-skills like being able to find the main idea. This is to say specifically, the issue on the author's mind in a piece of reading material. In doing this, the reader weaves together specific details to determine what is relevant to the central meaning (William, 1999).

Another sub-skill is the figurative language, which is used in a non-literal way to give a particular idea or picture in the mind (Longman Dictionary of contemporary English). Figurative language is not always obvious.

The third sub-skill is the discovery of text structure. This is the ability to follow the structure of a passage. The reader recognizes the relationship among the main idea and arranges them in the pattern of the entire discourse (Williams 1999).

The fourth and last sub-skill that is of concern to this study is the ability to recognize a writer's point of view. This usually involves mapping what is represented in the text against one's experience and knowledge (Wallace, 1996).

Authors don't expect readers to create inferences out of nothing. Authors provide information (that's the external text); readers, read that information in a variety of ways of create their internal text. When authors aren't providing literal information then they are implying something. "Authors imply, therefore readers have to infer. However, inferencing doesn't work if students don't have the right background knowledge. To help students make use of their background knowledge, the text should be previewed with them. Preview could be, asking students what they already know about the content of the selection. For example, the topic, the concept, or the time period. They could also be

asked what they know about the author as well as discussing the important vocabulary items used in the text. Students could also be shown some pictures or diagrams to prepare them for what they are about to read (Report of the National National Reading Panel, 2000).

In the words of Pressley and Block, (2002) when students access appropriate background experience, they are more likely to make inferences and elaborations that often lead to sophisticated understanding of texts, unfortunately, struggling readers may lack background experience about a specific area, or may associate incorrect or irrelevant background experience with a particular topic. This is where the application of which reading strategy becomes relevant. One such reading strategy is making connections to background experience. It is known as list, group, label or LGL (Taba, 1967).

It is a strategy that offers a variety of ways for the teacher to help student connect to background experience. It can help strong readers access their background experience and aid struggling readers by filling in missing knowledge and focusing on relevant background experience. The goal is for most students to be able to connect the text to background experience or recognize a lack of prior knowledge, independent of teacher assistance. A formal LGL activity may be tapered off and replaced by informal discussion about what is already known (Fournier and Graves, 2002).

In educationally advanced parts of the world, comprehension instructions, once seen as a black or white proposition is regarded as a complex challenge for many classroom teachers. According to Harcourt (2004), effective teachers now know, that reading passages and answering questions are far too shallow. These teachers understand the importance of providing explicit instruction in multiple comprehension strategies. A strategy is a plan selected deliberately by the teacher to accomplish a particular goal or

desired learning outcome (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

The use of strategy rarely happens in isolation, but often involves the interaction of a number of strategies simultaneously. A reader might make a connection within a text and at the same time make predictions about what will happen, as well as make an inference using implicit information presented (Annadale, 2005). The essence of this is to enable the learners build a web of skills needed in the development of reading for various purposes, of which inference an area of concern to this study is one.

For many students and teachers, comprehension is defined by the questions supplied by the reading passages. These questions may range from literal and inferential to evaluative. The fact of the matter is that, such questions are only assessing comprehension not teaching it (Umolu, 1996). So, the provision for testing inferential ability could be there without taking the students through the necessary steps involved. Historically, educators have asked students a barrage of questions under the guide of reading instruction, but there is little evidence to suggest this practice had positive results (Maloney, 2005).

In contact session with students as well as findings from other research works it has been observed that students are more comfortable with the linear translation of texts and tend to perform poorly in the task of interpreting a text (Pearson, Hansen and Gordon, 1979). This is why it is said that the ability to make inference is crucial for comprehension because inference facilitates a reader's ability to create personal and implied meanings from text (Wallis, 2005).

A close look at the handbook released by the Federal Ministry of Education on Examination Malpractice in January, 2007 revealed that the cheating that was carried out

in English Language paper 2 in every centre examination malpractice was recorded, was on the summary questions which calls for the exercise of inferential ability.

The researchers' conviction that the development of inferential ability in learners is not elusive or something to be left for the learners to explore and discover on their own justifies the need for this study, although a lot of work have been documented on suggestions of how to build inferential ability in learners. This study however has adopted Williams (1999) suggestions for inferring deeper meaning. The suggestion entails abilities such as; understanding figuration usage, finding the main idea, discovering text organization and recognizing a writer's point of view. This is to ascertain the authenticity of the suggestions. The researcher in turn has classified the enumerated abilities as sub-skills, which could be suitable for learners at the senior secondary school level, because of its simplicity.

Ability to discern levels of meaning develops with experience. The teacher should not expect from the adolescent reader the sophistication of an adult (Williams 1999).

1.2 Statement of Problem

Results in comprehension and summary over the years have been poor (WAEC Chief Examiner Report 1988 and 2001). The chief examiner's report on the West African Senior School Certificate Examination from (2003-2009) on English language highlights the following on candidates' weaknesses:

- i. Inability to restate the ideas of a passage in different words and expressions;
- ii. If candidates learn how to answer comprehension and summary questions, and make a serious attempt to understand the passages and questions they will do well in the examination

- iii. Inability to interpret questions so as to tackle the demands of the questions is seen in certain cases (questions on Essay).
- iv. Question 6 and 7 (comprehension): Majority of the candidates could not answer questions 6 (1d) correctly which dealt with irony in the passage. Teachers were instructed to pay attention to figures of speech and see to it that students have a thorough understanding of them.
- v. Lack of summary skills- mindless lifting, brought in irrelevant points.
- vi. The report stated that candidates still have a lot of work to do in these areas.

With the vast amount of time and resources expended on teaching the subject one would have expected good performance in comprehension and summary and especially in inferences (Banjo, 1989).

The problem of this study is to see if the poor performance of Senior Secondary School Students in the examinations is related to their use of inferential ability in reading comprehension despite the time and resources committed into teaching. The ability of students to draw inferences from any reading material is paramount to teaching and learning in schools. There is the need for students to be able to read between the lines for maximum comprehension in reading exercises. (Ambe, 2007). Regardless of whether the causes of reading problems are cognitive, emotional or otherwise, teachers must continue to find ways to help learners become readers that are more proficient.

Given the understandable importance of the English language at all levels of the educational system, it is important to ensure returns which are commiserate with the vast amount of time and resources spent on teaching the subject (Banjo, 1989). The detailed syllabus for both WAEC and NECO (2004-2006 and 2010-2012) on summary and comprehension spelt out the following requirements:

- i. Extract essential points and facts from passages;

- ii. Identify and explain literary term; and
- iii. Make required deductions from passages

For this reason, Williams (1999), inferring deeper meaning ability of: Understanding figurative language usage, finding main idea, discovering organization and recognizing a writers point of view have been adopted for this study. To the best knowledge of this researcher, none of these skills have been tested for possible enhancement of inferential ability of learners in senior secondary schools in Zaria local government area. There is therefore the need to test these skills to ascertain their effectiveness or otherwise in the development of inferential ability. The present study which focuses on these four skills is a step in the right direction. The findings of this study will be useful in improving the teaching and development of inferential ability in our learners.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the effect of instruction on reading comprehension skills of senior secondary school students inferential ability in Zaria local government area. It sought to determine the following:

- a. The performance of the students in the sub-skill of understanding figurative usage, finding main idea, discovery of text organization and recognizing a writer's point of view.
- b. The difference in performance of students taught reading comprehension skills and those not taught
- c. To compare students' performance in pre-test and post-test in control and experimental group based on gender.

1.4 Research Questions

The Research Questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. What is the performance of students in each of the four sub-skills of understanding figurative usage, finding main idea, discovering text organization, recognizing a writer's point of view and inferential ability?
2. What is the difference in the performance of students taught reading comprehension sub-skills and those not taught?
3. What is the difference between the scores of students in the pre-test and post –test of the two groups based on gender?

1.5 Hypotheses

The three null hypotheses corresponding to the research questions have been formulated as:

1. There is no significant difference in the performance of students in each of the four sub-skills and inferential ability.
2. There is no significant difference between the scores of students taught reading comprehension sub-skills and those not taught.
3. There is no significant difference between the scores of students in the pre and post-test of the two groups based on gender.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Reading is an invaluable language skill for the learner. The learner's willingness to learn it and ability to use it influence the entire academic attainment (Ogwude, 2004). This is why comprehension of reading materials at various levels has continued to

provide opportunities for continuous research work. Comprehension instruction was once viewed, as the simple task of providing students with ample opportunities to read a piece of text and respond to a variety of questions. It is now regarded as a complex challenge for many classroom teachers.

Studies have equally shown that weaknesses in reading comprehension is more readily recognized where the students skill in inferring meaning or deducing conclusion from given texts is tested. Result of such tests revealed that students are more comfortable with the linear translation of text and tend to perform poorly in the task of inferring from a text (Pearson, Hansen and Gordon, 1979).

Yet expectedly, the degree to which readers draw appropriate inference is seen as central to the comprehension of texts (Alderson, 1987). This revelation is a further enhancement to the importance of this study. Learners need to be exposed to the importance and place of inferential ability in reading comprehension. This also calls for volume reading which is associated with textual knowledge and world knowledge. This in turn produce good comprehender who have knowledge of text structures (Stanovich and Cunningham 1993). The student who does not read often and widely will almost surely stagnate in comprehension development (Meyer, Brandt, and Bluth 1980).

Most of the studies so far conducted on reading comprehension of secondary school students in Kaduna state are majorly on reading difficulty. If any has been done on inference, not with the same approach, as that of this study to the best of this researcher's knowledge. This study is also of the strong opinion that pedagogic factor is also a hindrance to learners development of inferential ability. This study therefore, hopes to create awareness by bringing to the notice of all stakeholders, the importance of the selected sub-skills for this level of learners that could go a long way in developing their inferential ability.

The inability of learners to infer, to deduce hidden meaning from explicitly stated information in reading materials is one of the challenges faced by learners in tackling examination questions as seen in the chief Examiners report on Senior School Certificate Exams. And because inference will not just happen without taking the learners through the necessary foundations, is the justification for this study. The study is significant in a way of adding to the data on the development of inferential ability in learner. Any effort to add to the frontier of knowledge is a step in the right direction.

This study is expected to be of immense benefit to the English language teacher, who all along may not have seen the need to take learners through the process of developing their inferential ability in reading comprehension? A very important skill that is worth teaching to enable the English language learner face the challenge of learning English, and at the same time studying core content through English. Another benefit to the teacher is the usage of the suggested sub-skills in this study which also includes the process of teaching them. The result of this exercise could inspire them to build on the sub-skills by reading to acquire other methods of developing inferential ability in a more advanced way.

Hopefully, the study will also be appreciated by policy makers who need to realize that, reading in language teaching is a broad area, which should be given more attention in the school curriculum.

The textbook writer also could use the finding to improve, on the standard of questions asked at the end of each reading passage in learners English language textbooks.

The learners themselves will notice appreciable change in their teachers teaching method which will in turn enhance their performance generally. The importance of this to the learner is that when their inferential ability is built, they will be motivated to read

more on their own. Their level of wider comprehension as a result of better teaching method on inference will be a new experience in their overall academic pursuit.

It is hoped that the results of finding on the teaching of the sub-skills of understanding figurative language, finding main idea, discovering organization and recognizing a writer's point of view would alert the classroom teacher on the need to adequately prepare for reading lessons. Curriculum planners hopefully could use the findings to improve the language arts method curriculum as it relates to the teaching of reading skills.

1.7 Scope and Delimitation

This study is restricted to the concept of inferential ability and the stages involved in arriving at inference like; finding main idea, discovering of text organization, recognizing a writers point of view and understanding figurative usage. This scope is based on the belief that these are vital for the development of inferential ability at the senior secondary level. The scope of this would be delimited to senior secondary school class one in Zaria Local Government for manageability. At this level it is expected that, students are exposed to higher order thinking questions that would help to build their inferential ability.

1.8 Basic Assumptions

This study was conducted based on the following basic assumptions:

1. Understanding figurative usage can influence the development of inferential ability.
2. Being able to find main idea as different from supporting details can aid the development of inferential ability.

3. The knowledge to discover text organization can influence the development of inferential ability.
4. Being able to recognize a writer's point of view can also aid the development of inferential ability.

1.9 Limitations

The limitation encountered in this study was the rejection by some schools to be used for the study. They complained of the disruption of their already planned scheme of work for the weeks to be used. As such the duration for teaching was reduced from eight weeks to six weeks. Some of the teachers to be used as research assistants were equally reluctant, and took a lot of cajoling from the researcher to pacify them.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature related to the study as follows: The concept of reading comprehension, inferential ability and gender, levels of reading comprehension, empirical studies carried out in and outside Nigeria on reading comprehension sub-skills, the sub-skills' of understanding figurative usage and inferential ability, finding main idea and inferential ability, discovering text organization and inferential ability, recognizing a writer's point of view and inferential ability, differentiating between text organization, recognizing a writer's point of view and inference, reading comprehension problems of secondary school students and methods of teaching reading comprehension skills, sbackground experience and the pedagogical implication of reading comprehension in inferential ability. Lastly, a theoretical framework was evolved.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework, which evolved from the review of literature for this study, is as follows; the disparity between the literal and figurative meaning which creates problem for the English language learner because figurative language is more picturesque. It limits the reader's interest and often conveys meaning hard to convey in words (Kurland, 2000). Inability to interpret figurative language can lead to a breakdown in text comprehension, which in turn frustrate readers and discourage them from continuing the reading task (Palmer & Brooks, 2004). For this reason, figurative language is a necessary component of instruction because of its implications for reading. When learners are thus discouraged to the extent of abandoning the reading task, the issue of inference will become a far cry in reading comprehension process.

Understanding figurative language is an aspect that is still much a neglected area in English language classrooms. This is one area this study is relevant, to encourage and emphasize the teaching of figurative language in English lessons. To buttress this fact is the chief examiners report on the West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination Council (Nov/Dec, 2007. P.4) which stated that: majority of the candidates could not answer question 6 (1d) on comprehension correctly which dealt with irony in the passage. It went further to state that, teachers were instructed to pay attention to figures of speech and see to it that students have thorough understanding of them. This is why this study is advocating process of scaffolding to assist learners understand figurative usage.

The maturity of the learners and the suitability of the reading materials, both of which determine readiness, interest and motivation, could also be a necessary tool for inference making in reading materials (Crimore, 2000, Maaka and Ward, 2000, Mokhari and Sheory, 2002 and Wissen, 2001).

The teacher should not expect from the adolescent reader, the sophistication of an adult. He should guide his student to interpret what they read in the light of their own relevant associations. On the basis of their own perceptions, he can then proceed to build an edifice of literary and life experiences. This is why this study thinks that the sub-skills chosen could serve as a model that could aid inferential ability for the level of learners being used for the study. More so, they encounter some of the skills in their English language texts on a daily basis.

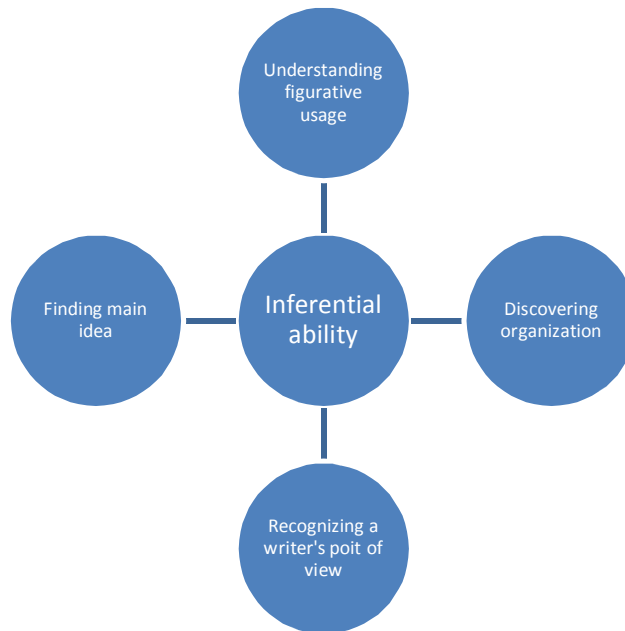
This is a study in the area of language education which is an attempt at assessing the inferential ability level of senior secondary school students in reading comprehension. This study, therefore, has a pedagogical dimension such as stressing the need for the effectiveness of explicit instruction in comprehension strategies. Study after

study has revealed that explicitly teaching student's even one strategy for comprehending text can improve their comprehension (National Reading Panel (2000), Pressley, (2000) and Pearson (1992).

In summary, the theoretical framework that emanated from this review was the seriousness of figurative language instruction in English language classrooms. As well as the need to teach the other sub skills needed for the gradual building of inferential ability in such level of learners.

The theoretical framework is shown graphically in figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: The theoretical Framework Adopted in this study



(Source: Williams,1999)

A study of the diagram above shows all the arrows pointing towards the middle. It explains that the contents of the four arrows is the source of power to the middle content. It is a network of skills that could help to build inferential ability.

2.3 The Concept of Reading Comprehension, Inferential Ability and Gender

Reading comprehension represents two different ideas. Reading is the identification of various words that make up a sentence, while comprehension is the ability to explain the various groups of sentences that formed the reading material. According to Rogers, (2007), comprehension is intense active work between the reader and the text with full concentration.

Reading, according to Dewey (2002) and Givon (1999), is a complex psychological process which involves mastery of the language signals (such as letter, words, sentence structure) and such psychological factors as readiness, interest motivation and the likes.

Comprehension is a consuming, continuous, and complex activity, but one that is both satisfying and productive (Duke and Pearson 2002). The relevance of comprehension in reading is so vital in inference, that learners are expected to be able to monitor meaning and comprehension while reading. According to Keene (2005) learners should be able to tell what makes sense and what does not make sense; does re-reading make it clearer; are learners aware of what they need to comprehend in relation to their purpose for reading, and must learn to pause, consider the meanings in text and use different strategies to enhance their understanding. Possession of these tools is expected to greatly enhance inference.

Reading is a transactional process between the reader, the text, and the context (Rosenblatt, 1978). A perfect oral reading of a passage is not proof of comprehension. Comprehension facilitates motivation for wider reading. Successes at school, especially at the higher level depend on the ability to read and understand (Olaofe, 1989 and Adeyanju, 1987). For this reason, text comprehension is not only an important part of performance in English, but also an important “gatekeeper” skill for students as they are expected to master content – area knowledge (Biancarosa and Snow, 2006). The relationship between reading comprehension and inference is that, basic comprehension

facilitates inference, while inference facilitates deeper comprehension. Part of the challenge with regard to comprehension for learners is that text comprehension becomes more difficult as learners get older and are expected to process increasingly sophisticated texts. “Simply put basic level literacy is insufficient in today’s world where both reading and writing tasks required of adolescents are continuing to increase in complexity and difficulty” (Biancarosa and Snow, 2006).

The concept of inference is the ability to comprehend a text beyond its literal meaning. It is explained as a process of drawing conclusions. It is the deductive process through which something is worked out or made explicit in terms of what’s unspoken or unwritten (Osisanwo, 2003).

According to Wallis (2005), inferencing requires active reading and a willingness to enter into partnership with an author. Inference requires that you make logical conclusions from information given. This requires careful reading and organization of ideas presented (<http://dnr.olinisiana.gov/sec/execdiv/tehasmt/ecep/english/r/r.htm>,2009). Various authors have also defined inference as a process of using facts to arrive at a broader conclusion (www/adudtreading/glossary.html.2007). However, inference can be a tricky affair because it is not clear how much the writer, expects the reader to infer. This is why Olaofe (1983) said it demands a critical reading rather than a general cursory exercise.

The ability to make inference is crucial for comprehension because it facilitates, a reader’s ability to create personal and implied meaning from text. Inferences are constructed from two sources: Prior knowledge assumptions about meaning not explicitly stated in the text or made clear by illustrations, photography or diagram. In Pressley (2002) contribution, reading is an active process wherein readers use prior knowledge to understand new information, ask questions before, during and after

reading, make inference, monitor their understanding and determine what is important as they read. This is why Keene and Zimmerman (1997) said, “to infer as we read is to go beyond literal interpretation and to open a world of meaning deeply connected to our lives”.

In the opinion of Al-jarf (2004), inference can be classified into two: the first kind of inference is the derivation of new information and the second is activation of available knowledge. These are referred to as textually and scriptally implicit inference.

The complexity of comprehension in reading and making inferences in reading lends support for the present study. Those learners must be taught the skills they need to develop their inferential ability. They cannot be left to pick them up through simple exposure to texts or through natural process of maturation.

For the above reason, this study views textually implicit inference as more relevant. Because to infer, is to deduce information or knowledge not overtly stated in a text. In this situation the learner is expected to use various clues like making predictions, interpreting meanings, using context clues, drawing conclusions, to make inference. To successfully do this, the learner’s ability to find main idea, understand figurative usage, discover organization as well as recognize a writer’s point of view cannot be over emphasized.

Summarily, it is expected that the overall outcome of integrating these processes may go a long way, to aid the development of inferential ability even where prior knowledge of the discourse is possibly lacking. The sub-skills could be seen as necessary foundational steps to building inference.

There have been suggestions that boys may be disadvantaged in academic literacy as a result of type of curricular emphases, teacher text and topic choices and lack of availability of texts that match their interests and needs(Smith and Wilhelm,2002). In

the same vein, Morgan(2005) says: The challenge for teachers is building from their passions, that way hook them with intrinsic motivation. Teach the strategies and skills and skills they need within a topic they care about. This argument seems as valid for girls as it does for boys; tapping into student passion.

Killan and Polit (2000) observed from their findings in a study carried out on “The effects of time induced stress on making inferences in text comprehension;There are no statistically significant differences in performance between boys and girls either on the test as a whole, on the sub-components of inference questions or even on a question by question basis.

The gender issue in this study, is an afterthought as a result of the peculiar nature of schools used. That is all boys and all girls schools. The similarity between this study and the one above is that both works were not specifically gender based from the onset. The difference however, in both studies is that, this present one is on “The effect of reading comprehension sub-skills on the inferential ability of learners. While the former is on “The effects of time induced stress on making inferences in text comprehension”

2.4 Levels of reading comprehension

Various studies have been carried out on levels of reading comprehension . Some of these have been named alike or differently by various scholars. A brief discussion on these may be necessary for this study.

Aukerman and Aukerman (1981) observed that comprehension is the act or process of grasping with the mind. Comprehension is not getting meaning from the printed page. There is no meaning on a printed page. There are only lines and curves that we happen to call letters and from which we build words. Meaning resides not on the printed page but

in the mind of the person who wrote the words. Comprehension will not be found on the printed page, but in the mind of the reader who reads the words.

There is need for proper understanding of the nature and level of reading comprehension and how comprehension skills can be developed. According to Quandt (1977), misunderstanding about the reading process or the process of learning to read can cause tremendous inefficiency and ineffectiveness in teaching. Speaking in the same vein, Oyetunde (1986) opines that: To succeed the teacher must have, thorough understanding of what it is he is teaching and how it is learned. The way a teacher teaches his subject is dictated both by his assumptions of what it is he is teaching, and his notions of how students learn (p 85). Dechant (1970) sees comprehension as related to: A reader's ability to follow the pattern of thinking intended and structured in the author's writing. In this sense, comprehension is rooted in and synonymous with intelligence, the ability to make cognitive relationship (p 64).

Comprehension means to grasp with, the proficient reader grasps with, that is understands the meaning intended by the author. To the extent that as one comprehends, one reduces any cognitive uncertainty that one may have had prior to reading. This means that the reader's experience plays a crucial role in reading comprehension. Thinking skills are a pre-requisite for comprehension. Thus to comprehend, one must think about what one has read. Robinson (1972) sees comprehension as an aggregate of many skills such as:

1. Grasping directly stated details or facts;
2. Understanding main ideas;
3. Grasping the sequence of time, place, ideas, events and steps;
4. Understanding and following directions;
5. Grasping implied meanings and drawing inferences;

6. Understanding setting and character(emotional reactions, motives, personal traits);
7. Sensing relationship of strife, place, cause and effects, events and characters;
8. Anticipating outcomes;
9. Recognizing author's tone, mood and intent;
10. Understanding and drawing comparisons and contrasts;
11. Drawing conclusions or making generalizations, and making evaluations.

Barlette (1968), captures it in the hierarchical order of five categories which include:- literal comprehension, recognition, inference, evaluation and appreciation.

Another view of reading comprehension is that of Herber's (1970) three levels of reading comprehensions. These are literal, interpretive and applied levels. At the literal, students decode words, ascertain specific meanings depending on content and see relationship among words. The interpretive level stresses relationship for what the author had in mind while writing. At the applied level ,the reader goes beyond the text information and creates new relationship through deepened understanding and extension of views.

Unoh (1983) also identifies three levels which are factual level, interpretive level and applicative level. Unoh (1983) in addition shares the views of Herbert(1970) about the number and nature of comprehension. These include literal, inferential and critical levels. To the literal level is simple, uncritical reproduction of what has been read. The second level involves drawing of inferences, discovering implications and reading between the lines. The third level entails evaluation and application of what is read through rigorous, critical judgment.

From Stoodt and Burns(1978) point of view, the literal is concerned with ideas or facts that are directly stated in the selection. It involves identification and recall of main ideas and details. In essence the literal level requires'' reading the lines'' as it merely

calls for understanding of word meaning, sentence meaning and paragraph meaning. This level according to this school of thought is said to be the basic level on which the other levels of comprehensions depend.

The reader is expected to arrive at understanding not directly in the text. The evaluative or critical level, requires judgment about the quality, value and validity of the contents. The creative reading is thinking beyond the lines of print; a deliberate effort to go beyond the lines of print or information read, to find new ways of viewing ideas, incidents, or characters that may stimulate novel thinking and production.

The foregoing has clearly demonstrated the complex nature of reading and levels of reading comprehension:-Dillner and Olson(1977) capture this fact in their observation that the complexity of the thinking process and the connection between thinking and reading is one reason why no single set of descriptions for the comprehension skills has ever been agreed upon.” From Williams(1999) point of view reading comprehension is classified into three levels namely: Literal (reading between the lines); Inferential; (reading between the lines)and Evaluative: (reading beyond the lines).

Barbara (2003) and Onyewotu (1991), as well holds that student can read on three levels, namely; literal, inferential and applicative levels. However, Olaofe(1998) and McCarthy(2000) holds a slightly different view of the comprehension level thus: reading comprehension is dependant upon the student and the readability of the text. It is the extent to which effective communication exist between the text and the reader. Three levels of reading was propounded by this school of thought namely;

(i) frustration level (ii) instructional level (iii) and independent levels. Each of these are determined by the reading ability of the student.

The frustration level portrays the category of students who find reading very difficult to understand because the linguistic items used is a complex one. Such readers have no hope of understanding what the writer is trying to convey.

The instructional level students can get some sense of the reading passage but need the help of the language teacher. While the last level (independent level) can get the message with help from the teacher (Olaofe 1983). The students in this category are conversant with the vocabulary and the grammatical features used in the passage.

From the foregoing reading comprehension is considered in this study for senior secondary school students under three broad levels namely; literal, inferential and evaluative. But specifically, this study dwells on reading for inferential meaning in reading comprehension because it is the first and basic skill required for higher thinking process academically and otherwise. It is the skill for moving forward.

2.5 Empirical Studies carried out in and outside Nigeria on Reading Comprehension Sub-Skills

Several scientifically based research works have been carried out on reading comprehension sub-skills in and outside Nigeria. The concern on how to teach and develop learners' reading comprehension ability by scholars was the bases for such research works carried out. Some of these are examined below as relevant to this study.

Reading comprehension sub-skills are the necessary foundational steps taken to arrive at deeper meaning or understanding. According to Stein and Glenn (1979) and Downing (1982), skilled readers often use particular sub-skills of reading skill simultaneously over the years and these sub-skills, originally distinct, become fused and no longer activated separately. This is what Hughes (1989) refers to as "macro skills" and "micro skills" of reading comprehension. He maintained that micro skills should be

taught not as an end in themselves but as a means of improving macro skills. The distinction between these two levels of sub-skills is not made explicit, but it appears that the term “macro skills” refers to understanding the general ideas in the text (example: information, gist, argument) while “micro skills” refers to recognizing and interpreting the linguistic features of the text (example: referents, word meanings, discourse indicators). Cummings (1983) maintains that reading comprehension consists of interrelated sub-skills which are induced and developed separately, and later by constant practice, fused into integrated and holistic skill. For this reason, the proponents of this position proposed the testing of different sub-skills.

In the words of Williams(1999), reading instruction involves the development of skills related to the various stages of the curriculum At the intermediate and advanced stages, the skills which are progressively developed enables the reader to interpret the meaning of sentences in connected discourse. Each level of comprehension skill has some sub-skills that enables the reader to arrive at that level of comprehension .The sub-skills of understanding lexical meaning, grammatical meaning, finding answers to direct reference questions and restating or paraphrasing the facts of the reading materials belong to the lower rank of the hierarchy of comprehension skills (Olajide,2009 and Williams, 1999). The above listed sub-skills however serves as the pre-requisite for reading comprehension. Though not strong enough to enable the learner add any novel personal information, should not be taken for granted in second language reading(Olajide,2009).

(Richek, List and Lerner, 1983) views comprehension as an aggregate of sub-skills. Therefore teaching the reading process involves teaching the skills like: Decoding or word identification skills recognizing syntactic relationships, recognizing text structure, making reference, recognizing anaphoric relationship, recognizing types of

cohesion and using background knowledge this group views comprehensions as a cognitive activity in which readers process different types of information to acquire knowledge about the topic presented in the text.

All reading purposes can be served by one or a combination of the six specialists reading sub-skills namely: Prediction, extracting specific information, getting the general picture, deducing meaning from context, recognizing functions, discourse patterns and markers and reading for inferential meaning (Harmer in Ogwude 2004).

Despite the fact that psychologists and educationists have been conducting research on various aspects of reading skills for more than a century, there are still controversies surrounding the exact nature of skill or skills that are involved in reading comprehension in L1 or L2. The analysis of the studies that have been conducted, appear to be complicated by the fact that usually many dimensions are found and similar dimensions are often named differently, as well as different dimensions being named alike (Gharanki and Shrifan, 2005). In general however, studies that have addressed the nature of reading skill(s) seem to have subscribed to one or the other of the two views: (a) reading skill is unitary, holistic and indivisible skill which cannot be split into different sub-skills, and (b) reading skill consists of various sub-skills. From the foregoing, it is obvious that this study is in the right direction by subscribing to reading comprehension sub-skills as a necessary step to building inferential ability in learners.

More importantly, for the category of learners used in this study, the adopted reading comprehension sub-skills of understanding figurative usage, finding main idea, discovering text organization, and recognizing a writer's point of view is deemed suitable for their level in building their inferential ability. In spite of all the research works on reading comprehension sub-skills, none has specified the subskills and level of learners adopted for this study.

2.5.1 The sub-skill of Understanding Figurative Usage and Inferential Ability

Figurative language is language that is used in non-literal sense, but in an imaginative way (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 2002). Figurative language, in particular the use of idioms is, usually an arduous task for English language learners. As the learner, struggles to acquire the necessary English vocabulary to be academically and socially successful, the learner would continue to encounter challenging figures of speech in the classroom and in everyday life.

Palmer and Brooks, (2004), noted that, the inability to interpret figurative language leads to a breakdown in text comprehension, which in turn can frustrate readers and discourage them from continuing the reading task. To buttress this fact, Kurland (2000) noted that the need to read ideas, not words, comes from the use of figurative language. Meanings are often conveyed by suggesting that something is like something else. Example: Mervin runs like a duck. The comparison is, of course, only suggestive. Mervin doesn't really run like a water bird. Here again, we must not talk only of what the remark says (Mervin runs with a waddle) we must recognize what the remark does (it compares Mervin's running to that of a duck) and from that infer what the remark means (Mervin is awkward). Here again justifies the acquisition of inferential ability by learners as a basic pre-requisite for aiding the comprehension of figurative usage in any given material.

Learners spend a period reading with the purpose of searching for expressions that makes one stop and really visualize what one reads Monroe, (2005). And because, inferring deeper meaning brings into play ability such as, understanding figurative usage, an essential component of reading comprehension it is, pertinent for a teacher to teach the skills required for various types of reading, before assigning learners to reading

comprehension exercises. Aptly put, Boers (2000) said, figurative language instruction is based on a person's schema and explicit instruction is often needed for English language learner (ELL) student to understand the figurative expressions. Students who develop the ability to interpret figurative language not only expand their capabilities for creative thought and communication, but also acquire insight to expressive forms of language, allowing them to comprehend the text and speech on a deeper and more meaningful level (Palmer and Brook, 2004). They must see what words do and mean.

The implication of understanding figurative language usage in texts is that readers do not have to identify specific form of figurative language, whether it is dealing with simile, metaphor, and personification or otherwise. They must however see, that the text does use figurative language and infer an appropriate meaning behind the words (Kurland, 2000).

The area of convergence here in relation to this study is the gap between figurative language instruction and inferential ability. One way a teacher can bridge such challenging gap to inferential ability is by the use of learners' creativity and concrete tools, such as figurative language posters that illustrate the literal and figurative meanings of the sayings (Tompkins, 2002). Of importance to this study is that aspects such as this could help to scaffold a student's access to figurative language which is a major hurdle to inferential ability. The table below is an example of scaffolding students' access to figurative language.

Table 2.1: A sample Format for such Posters.

Figurative language	Literal meaning	Intended meaning	Connections to the life
Beeline	Bees fly in a certain way when returning to their hive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A straight line • Hurry from one place to another • Go rapidly or directly forward. 	The “Beeline Express Ways” in Orlando, Florida, is a highway that connects Orlando to the east coast.

The above table could help the learner to understand the surface meaning of the word “Bee-line” before arriving at the figurative (intended) meaning. Creativity then comes in when the word is connected to real life by using it in a correct sentence. Such a poster helps to concretize the word, the literal meaning, the figurative meaning and usage in the mind of the learner. Thus erasing the confusion usually caused by the disparity between the literal and figurative meanings. This method of scaffolding the students could also help to remove the stumbling block posed by figurative language usage in making the required inference in reading comprehension.

In summary, the relevance of this review to this study is that teaching/learning outcome of figurative language in reading passage, which could hitherto be a Hindrance to inference making could be overcome.

2.5.2 The Sub-skill of Finding Main Idea and Inferential Ability

Finding main idea is to say specifically, the issue on the author’s mind in a piece of reading material. In searching for main idea, the reader weaves together specific details to determine what is relevant to the central meaning (Williams, 1999). The main idea may be expressed in an opening topic sentence, as part of a sentence, in the middle of the paragraph or may have to be inferred from several sentences or from the whole

paragraph. Comprehension is increased, when a student can identify the relationship between topics, main ideas and details (Lenski, Wham and Johns, 1991). Many textbooks, are conceptually dense and therefore struggling readers, have difficulty identifying what information is important and what information is extraneous. This is why (Meyer, Brandt and Bluth (1980) said, the student who does not read often and widely will almost surely stagnate in comprehension development. Comprehension is building bridges, between the new and the known, comprehending is not simply a matter of recording and reporting verbatim what has been read. It involves great deal of inference making (Person and Johnson, 1978).

Cunningham, Moore and Hennings,(1991) termed the process of finding main idea as “invention”. This requires readers to create rather than locate ideas. A reader relate what is in the text to what is already known about the topic, making connections between significant details and making inferences that go beyond the details explicitly stated in the text.

The question, how does main idea help the reader better understand the text is answered in the words of Harris (1962). The ability to find out the most important thing an author is trying to say, the central thought or main idea is perhaps the most important of all specific comprehension skills. Without it, the reader gets lost in a mass of detail, inspecting trees but unable to see the forest. As such many kinds of practices can be used to develop the ability to grasp the main ideas, like the following:

- i. Topic sentence: Learners can be asked to find the one sentence in a paragraph that contains the central thought in discussing the differences between a topic sentence and other sentences, paragraph structure is analyzed. This way, the learner’s ability to understand that the first or the last sentence may state the main idea is built (Harris, 1962);

- ii. Introductory and concluding paragraphs: In well-written selections, there is often an introductory paragraph or section that sets the purpose or explains the scope of the selection, and a concluding paragraph or section that summarizes. Learners can be trained to read introductions and conclusions carefully, looking for the main idea or ideas (Harris, 1962);
- iii. Titles and Headings: An author usually tries to convey the main theme in the title given to a selection, and in informational material the main idea of each section is suggested in the heading. Here again, learners could be given selections from which titles and headings have been removed and be asked to write their own headings or titles and
- iv. One-sentence Summaries: Asking learners to state the gist of a passage or selection in one sentence is a challenging way to get them to try to distill the essential from the many details (Harris, 1962).

In summary, and in line with this study, the important view expressed here is that finding main idea involves the use of inferential ability. Because the process of identifying a main idea itself in a piece of write-up requires ability to infer directly or indirectly, a learner who is taught to identify a main idea as different from supporting details is already building inferential ability.

2.5.3 The Sub-skill of Discovering Text Organization and Inferential Ability

In narrative materials, whether fiction, true events or historical accounts, a series of events is related. In order to understand, it is necessary to be able to note and remember the order in which the events took place, and to comprehend, at least partially, the cause – effect chain linking each event with the preceding and following events. Williams (1999) said, it is the ability, to follow the structure of a passage. The reader

recognizes the relationship among the main ideas, and arranges them in the pattern of the entire discourse. To achieve this, basic comprehension of the entire text is a basic prerequisite. Research has also shown that good comprehenders have stronger knowledge of text structure than do poor comprehenders (Meyer, Brandt and Bluth, 1980). This is why wider reading is associated with textual knowledge and world knowledge (Stanovich and Cunningham, 1993).

Critical readers are also aware of the structure of a text, both in terms of the movement of ideas from beginning to end and in terms of the relationship of ideas throughout the text. They distinguish between assertions offered as reason or conclusion, cause or effect, evidence or illustration. They recognize patterns of contrast and distinguish whether contrasting ideas are shown to be dissimilar or contradictory (Kurland, 2009). But for the non-critical reader, texts provide facts; knowledge comes from memorizing the statements within a text. As such inference becomes a far-cry.

Discovering text organization results in deeper thinking and helps determine importance (Hoyt, 2005). Many students have been promoted each year even though they were reading at a surface level. They pretend to read. They can answer questions at the end of the chapter by going back into the text and copying what resembles to be an answer. They can guess the low-level questions most of the time, but cannot make inference or summarize or do any of the higher level responses.

However, Harris (1962) said, retelling the story is the most natural way to develop ability to prove grasp of sequence. In order to understand, it is necessary to note and remember the order in which the events took place, and to comprehend the cause-effect chain linking each event with the preceding and the following events.

Questions on organization can be:

- a. What is the topic sentence of a particular paragraph?

- b. What are the words and phrases in the first paragraph, which point to the main idea in succeeding paragraphs (Williams 1999).

However, Al-Jarf (2004), who referred to the structural characteristics of the text as: coherence, hierarchical organization, and propositional density said, to comprehend text structure, the students should be able to identify the following:

- i. Central idea, that is, statement in sentence form that gives the explicitly stated or implied major topic of a passage or the topic sentence paragraph.
- ii. Paragraph organization, that is, introduction, middle and conclusion of paragraph.
- iii. Organizational clues, that is, signaling devices or sentence connectors that indicate a particular pattern of organization such as:
 - a. Listing: the following, in addition, also another;
 - b. Sequence: first, second, meanwhile, afterwards;
 - c. Cause-effect: since, because, as a result, therefore, consequently;
 - d. Comparison/Contrast: however, yet, nevertheless, although;
 - e. Classification: is divided into, is categorized into;
 - f. Exemplification: for example, for instance, such as, similar to;
 - g. Organization outline, that is, main idea and supporting details in outline form (Al-Jarf, 2004).

Of all that have been reviewed here, one thing stands out. That is text organization is all about interactive paragraphs and the result of coherence in any informational text. In summary, the points that agrees with this study are the first and last points that talks about the central idea as a statement in sentence form, which gives the topic sentence, or paragraph. While the last point, organization outline talks about main ideas and supporting details in outline form. It is expected that the teaching and learning

outcome of being able to identify and distinguish central idea as being able to identify and distinguish central idea as different from supporting details would greatly enhance the drawing of inference as the process itself demands critical thinking.

2.5.4 The Sub-skill of Recognizing a Writer's Point of View and Inferential Ability

An understanding of the writer's intention is essential. Understanding author's purpose helps learners recognize an author's reason(s) for writing. Example; to persuade, describes, explain or entertain. It also helps them understand how the author thinks, feels, or believes something, through careful reading of a text (Chall and Stall 2009).

It is common place in theories of reading to seek skills which underly or contribute to the reading process, sometimes the skills identified relate to linguistic features of text in general, sometimes these skills relate to different sorts of meaning in text, sometimes they relate to supposed different levels of the understanding that readers can derive from text (Alderson, 1987).

This is why Williams (1999), said, a ten year old reading Gulliver's travels sees the novel as a tale of adventure. He is not mature enough to grasp the underlying satire. Ability to discern levels of meaning develops with experience. The adult re-reading literature he read as a child apprehends deeper meanings because of his maturity. As such, the teacher should not expect from the adolescent reader the sophistication of an adult. The teacher should guide his students to interpret what they read in the light of their own relevant associations. On the basis of their own perceptions, he can then proceed to build an edifice of literary and life experiences.

Recognizing a writer's point of view usually involves mapping what is represented in the text against our own experience and knowledge (Wallace, 1996). An

attempt to understand the purpose or the motivation behind the creation of a text demands critical reading. This is because the writer's purpose directly affects the way the text is constructed.

On the other hand, Harris (1962) believes that the author's intent is sometime clear and straightforward, while at other times, it is not so obvious especially, where the writer uses exaggeration and irony. The essence of recognizing a writer's purpose is aptly captured in the words of Monroe (2005). When learners read from a writer's point of view, their understanding of, and appreciation of the texts they are reading increases. They begin to understand the concepts of audience and purpose. Buttressing this fact, Routemann (2003) said, when readers see text through the eyes of a writer, they notice the subtleties of language, of word choice, and imagery. They are better able to savor the richness of a well-chosen verb or the beauty of a metaphor. When readers see text through the eyes of a writer, they savor the fine points, think about meaning and comprehend more deeply. Although learners may not from the beginning notice all the details stipulated above, they can begin from somewhere, from general to specifics.

In summary, the teaching and learning outcome on reading from a writer's point of view, is expected to enhance the art of drawing inference in learners. Learner's have to be taught that to read from a writer's point of view, they have to partner with the author basically through Keen interest on the subject of discussion. This is a necessary pre-requisite to help the learner relax and be able to read and re-read to arrive at the author's intended message.

2.5.5 Differentiating Between Text organization, Recognizing a Writers Point of View and Inference

Text organization is being able to note and remember the order in which events took place, and to understand the cause-effect chain linking each event with the

preceding and following events. Discovering text organization results in deeper thinking and helps determine importance (Hoyt, 2005). Recognizing a writer's point of view is being able to tell the author's reason for writing. Example; to persuade, describe, explain, or entertain. It also helps the reader understand how the author thinks, feels, or believes something through careful reading of text (Chall and Stall, 2009). While inference is the process of creating personal meaning from text. It involves a mental process of combining what is read with relevant prior knowledge (schema) The reader's unique interpretation of text is the product of this blending.

2.6 Reading Comprehension Problems of Secondary School Students and methods of teaching reading comprehension skills

Reading comprehension problems are those limitations that impede the identification and interpretation of words in reading materials. Dallman in Ojo (2008) states, without that skill in associating meanings, no one can be an effective reader. The causes of this problems, such as poor language development, the effect its of bilingualism and poor understanding of the structural essentials of the second language. There is also problems associated with lack of teachers of reading (Ojo, 2008).

According to Unoh(1980), the finding and observation of researchers, teachers and experts revealed the following reading problems of students in secondary schools:

- a. Slow reading rate
- b. Slow comprehension rate
- c. Difficulty in distinguishing main ideas from details;
- d. Inefficiently in reading for gist and making good summaries;
- e. Ineffective recall of what is read
- f. Uncritical reading behavior
- g. Difficulty with creative reading

- h. Difficulty with intensive reading
- i. Inadequate vocabulary or word power and
- j. Inadequate reading interest

As a result of the reading problems of secondary school students, various interest groups, over the year have proffered solutions for the way forward. One common factor that stands out is the agreement that, the teaching of reading should follow a lay down procedure of planning, preparation, presentation and practice (Onukaogu and Umolu 2002).

Reading instruction involves the development of skills related to the various stages of the curriculum. At the intermediate and advanced stages, the skills which are progressively developed enable the reader to interpret the meaning of sentences in connected discourses. Classroom approaches should be concerned with reading strategies for different purposes. Reading comprehension skills at the secondary school levels can be classified as:

- (i) Literal: Understanding literal meaning (reading the lines)
- (ii) Inferential: Inferring deeper meaning (reading between the lines)
- (iii) Evaluative: evaluating meaning and method (reading beyond the lines).

A generalized scheme for conducting the reading comprehension lesson can be devised along the following lines:

Pre-reading Assistance:

In the form of background information, discussion or activities relevant to the theme of the passage.

Reading the Passage:

To be done by teacher or student, aloud or silently, depending on the type of material being read.

Procedures for Questioning

Based on techniques for eliciting responses to direct reference, inferential, and evaluative questions.

Supplementary Activities

These may be oral or written, consisting of assignments to be done in class or projects to be completed out of class.

- (i) **Pre-reading Assistance:** Relevant background experiences facilitate comprehension. If the student is introduced to relevant sub-suming concepts prior to the reading of a selection, he would have an anchor for understanding the details of the selection.

Pre-reading assistance can be verbal, the teacher giving background information as a basis for a brief discussion before reading the passage. It can also be non-verbal, in the form of a demonstration or any kind of pictorial illustration. The passage below on various types of storms will serve, as an example of pre-reading assistance, reading the passage, and procedures for questioning. A devised generalized scheme for conducting the reading comprehension lesson.

Storms are violent disturbances of the atmosphere accompanied by high winds, heavy rainfall thunder and lightning. There are different types of storms, depending on the conditions of weather in a particular place. We shall briefly describe three types: thunderstorms, hurricanes, and tornadoes.

Thunderstorms occur when hot, moist air rises fast and cools rapidly. Dark clouds are formed, and there is heavy rain with sharp flashes of lightning and crashes of thunder. Lightning is a spark of electricity passing

from one cloud to another or to the earth. It is usually followed by thunder which is a loud explosive noise.

Hurricanes are storms with strong fast winds. They happen frequently in the West India. They begin over warm seas, with the air raising and circling round and round. The air develops speed until it becomes a roaring wind, and the rain beats down in big drops. Hurricanes cause severe damage when they reach the land. Houses are blown down, property and animals are destroyed, and sometimes people are killed if they do not pay attention to the hurricane warnings.

The centre of a hurricane is called the 'eye'. The eye of a hurricane is very calm. It can be observed by aircraft which are used to track hurricanes. Radar is another method that is used to find the position of hurricanes. They can also be photographed by satellites travelling around the earth. The information which is gathered by all these methods makes it possible for weathermen to warn people when a hurricane is coming.

Another kind of violent storm is the tornado. A tornado is a fierce wind in the form of a great column of whirling air. It can spin at speeds of 300 miles per hour and faster. It is very tall pipe of air that reaches from the ground up to the clouds. It begins over very hot land cold air flows in the hot air begins over very hot land. Cold air flows in and the hot air moves up quickly. The tornado has a sucking movement which takes up everything in its path: dust, fences and roofs of houses. Even cars are carried high into air, to be dropped back to the ground. A tornado, like a hurricane is exceedingly dangerous. Fortunately, a tornado does not last for a long time.

Every member of the class would have witnessed some type of storm, and would therefore be able to contribute to a background discussion on the topic of the reading passage. But not all members would have experienced all the different types of storms. In which case it is useful to give pre-reading assistance in the form of verbal descriptions or pictorial illustrations: of the movements of air that causes storms; of weather satellites, radar screens, tracking aircraft; and the damage done by storms in different lands.

- (ii) **Reading the Passage:** The initial reading of the passage can be done aloud or silently; by the teacher, and students in chorus – depending on the types of passage. For a lyrical poem or a dramatic piece, reading aloud is necessary. A certain type of prose might best be read aloud in order to elucidate nuances of meaning that would otherwise be lost to the students.

For the most part, the emphasis should be on silent reading in the secondary school. The mechanics and advantages of reading which is normally done is silent reading – of novels, newspapers, magazines, letters, and forms to be filled, and so on. And we know that reading aloud takes twice as long. Silent reading in class trains students for what they will do when they leave school.

In a 40 minutes lesson, seven minutes is adequate for the initial reading. This is best done with one or two questions on the blackboard to direct the reading to some purpose.

Questions:

- Either: The passage mainly describes three types of storm. In what ways are they (a) similar, (b) different?
- Or: What does the passage say about storms that (a) you know; (b) you don't know?

Questions such as the above, serve as an introduction to the detailed treatment of the passage.

(iii) Procedures for questioning: Our earlier classification of comprehension skills provides a convenient framework for asking various types of questions:

Literal: In what part of the world do hurricanes frequently occur?

Inferential: Why does the writer use the word ‘fortunately’ in the last sentence of paragraph 5?

Evaluation: Do you think the writer gives a clear description of the different types of storms? If so, point out some words/ expressions which help to make the description clear.

The following points on procedures for questioning should be borne in mind.

General opening question:

The opening question should be tied to the content of the selection. Questions like: “What is the passage all about?” should be avoided, since they can be asked of just any passage. The two blackboard questions given earlier are good examples of opening questions. They have a focal point, and are dependent on the passage.

Unfamiliar words and expressions:

Detailed treatment of lexical items should come after, not before the initial reading. Words and phrases are best explained in the context in which they are used. The “eye of a hurricane” in paragraph 4 of the passage is an obvious example of context clues. The students themselves should be allowed to identify lexical items which they find difficult.

The Receptive aspect in students’ responses

Correcting errors of expression in student’s responses should not obtrude on the main business of comprehension. Neither should students be unduly inhibited by

strictures against the use of sentence fragments or direct quotations from the passage. Take the question, “which comes first, the thunder or the lightning?” There is nothing wrong with the one-word answer, “Lightning”. Or the question, “According to the passage, what is radar used for?” if a student answers, “To find the position of hurricane”, he is quoting directly from the passage – and the quite properly so since there is nothing to be gained by insisting that the student uses his own words in answer to this question. The main concern is that the student grasps the essential meaning of the passage. Furthermore, answer given in the style of authentic communication should be encouraged.

Free response versus multiple-choice questions

The multiple-choice format has advantage of focusing attention on comprehension, rather than grammatical correctness in responses.

But most direct reference questions, the free –responses format is quite appropriate compare these two question on the same detail in the passage:

MULTIPLE-CHOICE: A tornado can spin at speed a of:

- (a) 200 m.p.h.
- (b) 300 m.p.h.
- (c) 400 m.p.h.
- (d) 500 m.p.h.

DIRECT REFERENCE: How fast can a tornado spin?

The latter question is neater, and more to the point. The free-responses question is also appropriate when the student is required to associate his experience with the content of the material read, so that his answer is not the usual correct/incorrect type:

FREE RESPONSE QUESTION: Apart from houses, animals and cars, what other kinds of property have you seen destroyed by storms?

(iv) **Supplementary activities:** These can take a variety of forms, different from straight question-and-answer routine of the conventional comprehension exercise.

Group work

Small- group activities can be organized to discuss both free response and multiple-choice type question. projects relate to the passage can be assigned to groups, to done out of class: e.g. investigating the effects of local winds like the Harmattan on human, animal, and vegetable life.

Oral/written follow-up

Ask the students to describe an occasion when they experienced a violent disturbance of the weather, or to write a summary of the passage based on question already presented and discussed. Here are some questions which may be used:

- (a) What is the state of the weather during a storm?
- (b) What are the special conditions which exist during a thunder storm?
- (C) How do hurricanes develop, and what damage do they cause?
- (d) How do weather men gather information about storms?
- (e) In what ways does a tornado show its violence?

If the above questions are answered in to more than two sentences for each question, the sentences joined together will constitute a summary of the passage.

Role-switching

The teacher usually ask the questions. Why not switch roles and let the students ask the question? Asking relevant question is an overt manifestation of sound mental process taking place during the reading act. A student may direct his question to members his class, or to the teachers. The resulting interaction adds a deeper dimension to the class discussion, and brings to light meaning that would otherwise not be revealed

in a dominative, teacher-questioning approach. Still with our passage on storms, is a sample of questions from students:

- (a) What is the atmosphere really? And how can it be disturbed?
- (b) How is electricity in lightning cause? Is it the same as what is used in homes, factors, and street lights?
- (c) How does radar work, so that can be used to find the position of hurricanes?
- (d) What other kinds of storms are there? In what countries do they happen?

Young minds can ask probing questions on things which an adult may take for granted. If satisfactory answers to such questions are not immediately found, assignments can be given out of class to find the answers. Another alternative is that groups student prepare in advance question and answers on a passage, so that they can ask other groups, and provide the answers if the other groups fail to do so.

Ability to select the right meanings of words is obviously a skill to be developed in the reading comprehension lesson. Take the three meanings of the word ‘atmosphere’:

- (1) The mixture of gases that surround any heavenly body;
- (2) The air, as in the sky or in an enclosed space;
- (3) The feeling among a group or produced by the surroundings.

The best meaning for the passage is “ the air, as in the sky”. Students can be required to select the right dictionary meanings of words like ‘flashes’, ‘eye’, and ‘position’.

2.7 Background Experience

Authors don’t expect readers to create inferences out of nothing. Authors provide information (that’s the external text); readers, read that information in a variety of ways of create their internal text. When authors aren’t providing literal information then they are implying something. “Authors imply, therefore readers have to infer. However,

inferencing doesn't work if students don't have the right background knowledge. To help students make use of their background knowledge, the text should be previewed with them. Previewed could be, asking students what they already know about the content of the selection. For example, the topic, the concept, or the time period. They could also be asked what they know about the author as well as discussing the important vocabulary used in the text students could also be shown some pictures or diagrams to prepare them for what they are about to read (Report of the National Reading Panel, Teaching Children to read).

In the word of Pressley and Block, (2002) when students access appropriate background experience, they are more likely to make inferences and elaborations that often lead to sophisticated understanding of texts, unfortunately, struggling readers may lack background experience about a specific area, or may associate incorrect or irrelevant background experience with a particular topics. This is where the application of which reading strategy becomes relevant. One such reading strategy is making connections to background experience. It is known as list, group, label or LGL (Taba, 1967). The method is explained as follows:

List: First, the teacher selects a one or two word topic from the material students will read. This topic is listed on the chalkboard, next, individuals or small groups of students brainstorm words and phrases related to the topic, and responses are recorded. The list should be kept to a manageable size. When most students have responded, the listing portion is concluded.

Group: The teacher then reads the list generated by the students, allowing each student to hear the correct pronunciation. The teacher may also wish to point out features, such as root words or affixes, or clarify the meaning of new words. Students are then instructed to group the list content into smaller categories. These categories should

contain words that have something in common with one another. It is usually helpful to set parameters such as “Each group must contain at least three words”. We have found it helpful to suggest that students keep a miscellaneous pile for words they still do not know how to use.

Label: Once students have categorized the original list, they are instructed to label each category with a title reflecting the similar characteristics of the word. These labels are then shared with the whole group. Each group is asked to justify why the words were grouped in that particular way. A complete LGL example is illustrated in figure 2.

Figure 2
List, Group, Label-Grouped concepts
Of the American Revolution

<p>Outcomes of revolution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change Overthrow of authority Conflict War Rebellion Freedom Liberty <p>Economic reasons for rebellion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Money Stamp Act Boston Team Party Exploitation Taxes <p>Patriots</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Samuel Adams Crispus Attucks Benjamin Franklin John Hancock Thomas Jefferson Paul Revere George Washington <p>Political Changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Declaration of Independence New government The Constitution Rule of the law Independence Natural rights of man 	<p>The war</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1776 fourth of July Declaration of Independence Lexington and Concord Staratoga and Yorktown Valley Forge Philadelphia Social and political reasons for revolution Social unrest Political oppression Human rights Liberty Equality Opposition British Redcoats Great Britain King George III Loyalists
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Source: Pressley, M and Block , C.C (2002).

It is a strategy that offers a variety of ways for the teacher to help students connect to background experience. It can help strong readers access their background

experience and aid stragglers by filling in missing knowledge and focusing on relevant background experience text to background experience or recognize a lack of prior knowledge, independent of teacher assistance. A formal LGL activity may be tapered off and replaced by informal discussion about what is already known (Fournier and Grave, 2002).

2.8 The Pedagogical Implication of Reading Comprehension in Inferential Ability.

Pedagogically, finding solutions to reading difficulties can be challenging. Often the classroom teachers does not fully comprehend the sources of the problems or know how to go about solving them, especially because some causes of reading difficulties originates from outside the educational context (Ambe, 2007). It is therefore, very important for the teacher to provide learners with opportunities to discuss texts in a variety of setting so as to make connections between conclusions they draw and other beliefs of knowledge. The product of this blending by the reader would be a unique interpretation of the text. Motivation is one of the most powerful tools for students' success in English for academic purposes (Wissen, 2001). Motivated learners, make choices to stay engaged, and to persist because of their interest and the expectation of outcome.

This is why Annadale (2005) said that, comprehension instruction once viewed as a black or white proposition is now regarded as a complex challenge for many classroom teachers. These teachers understand the importance of providing explicit instruction in multiple comprehension strategies. The selection of what strategies to teach should be determined by student needs and the type of text being introduced.

A strategy is a plan selected deliberately by the teacher to accomplish particular goal or a desired learning outcome (National Institute of Child Health and Human

Development, 2000). The establishment of the purpose for any reading in the classroom by the teacher should be a basic strategy to be emphasized.

Because the ability to read is both critical educational issue and a necessary tool for becoming a successful member of society, educators, researchers, and policymakers continue to find ways to help students become successful readers (Ambe, 2007). In their contribution, Cunningham & Allington (1999) came up with a simple teaching technique for establishing the purpose for reading as “Everybody Read To” (ERT). For example, students read to find something stated explicitly in the text (denoted by the word find) and infer something from the facts in it) denoted by the words figure out).

By establishing the purpose for reading teachers help model how to focus on the most important aspects of a text. ERT helps remind teachers of the importance of asking inferential questions, not just literal (or test-preparatory) questions. By including literal and inferential purposes, teachers model for students how to move away from narrow, fact-based questions and answers and set more global purposes for reading (Cunningham and Allington, 1999). When learner’s inferential ability is well developed through various teaching strategies, learners become skilled and proficient readers. When they infer, proficient readers:

- i. Remember and reply what they have read;
- ii. Create new background knowledge for them;
- iii. Discriminate and critically analyze text and authors; and
- iv. Engage in conversation and or other analytical or reflective responses to what they read (jmssicecene web.tripodcom/vocabulary.htm, 2007).

2.9 Summary

The review of related literature in regards to this study, was on reading comprehension, inferential ability and gender, levels of reading comprehension, empirical studies carried out in and outside Nigeria on reading comprehension sub-skills. The sub-skill of understanding figurative usage and inferential ability, sub-skill of finding main idea and inferential ability, sub-skill of discovering text organization and inferential ability, sub-skill of recognizing a writer's point of view and inferential ability, differentiating between text organization, recognizing a writer's point of view and inference, reading comprehension problems of secondary school students and methods of teaching reading comprehension, background experience, and lastly, the pedagogical implications of reading comprehension in inferential ability were reviewed and a theoretical framework was evolved.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology and procedures for conducting this study. These include the research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, research instrument, pilot study, as well as procedure for data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

The research design used for this study was experimental. In this, there was a control and experimental group of students. Their entry behavior was determined for equivalence in the two groups by a pre-test, as advocated by (Daramola, 2006). The experimental group of students were then taught for six weeks on, understanding figurative language, identification of main idea, discovering text organization and recognition of a writer's point of view in reading comprehension. After which the students (the experimental group) were then tested again to assess their performance and ability on the sub-skills and inferential after treatment. The scores of the pre-test and post-test, of the experimental group was then analysed and compared after treatment.

3.3 The Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of all SS 1 learners in the seven Government Secondary Schools in Zaria Local Government Area, with a population of one thousand, three hundred and sixty three (1363) students (Zaria Education Zonal Office). SS 1 students were used for this study because it is the foundation class at the senior secondary school level. The reason for the selection of this class is because they should have made appreciable progress in reading at least, at the surface level. It is therefore

reasonable that they begin to see and appreciate reading comprehension at a deeper level, as they prepare for more technical and abstract concepts in studies.

Table 3.1: The target population for the study

School	Alhuda- huda college	Barewa College	G.G.S.S Congo	G.G.S.S K/gaya	G.S.S Zaria	G.G.S.S T/Saibu	Kufena College	Total
Population	223	294	164	164	158	155	205	1363

Source: Zaria Education Zonal Office

3.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The simple random sampling technique was used. The list of all the Government Secondary schools in the study Local Government numbering seven was collected from the ministry of Education; Zaria Zonal Office. From the list of four boys schools and three girls schools, five schools were selected at random. Using the principle of randomization which gave every subject in a population an equal chance of appearing in the selection, thus all the seven schools in Zaria Local Government were listed and numbers assigned to each school. The numbers were written on a piece of paper which were folded and put in separate containers for boys schools and girls schools. The boys schools were four and the girls schools were three. The containers were shaken, and piece of paper randomly picked from both containers until the five schools required for the study were selected. A preliminary investigation showed that the target population (SS1) has more than two arms in each of the schools selected. The same procedure of random sampling was used to assign any arm as either a control group or an experimental group in each of the schools. The decision on which school should be used as experimental or control was done serially according to how the schools were listed. If the first was classified experimental, the next became control. This brought about the

number of school used as experimental, to two, while control was three. Alhuda-huda College, Government Girls Secondary School Congo, and Kufena College Served as control group schools. While Barewa College and Government Girls Secondary School Kofan-Gaya served as experimental group schools. A total number of two hundred and sixteen students (216) were used for the study comprising, of one hundred and twenty-six (126) students for control group and ninety two (92) students for experimental. This also amounts to approximately twenty percent (20%) of the entire population which is a fair representation for a descriptive study as this (Whawo, 2000).

Table 3.2: Sample selected for the study.

School	Alhuda-huda College	Barewa College	Kufena College	G.G.S.S. Congo	G.G.S.S K/Gaya	Total
Population	223	294	205	164	164	1050
Sample	44	49	41	41	41	216

Source: Zaria Education Zonal Office.

3.5 Instrumentation

The instruments used for data collection were reading comprehension passages, from which test items were drawn, on the four sub-skills. These included understanding figurative language, finding the main idea, discovering organization, recognition of a writer's point of view and inferential.

Three passages were carefully selected from Williams (1999, p. 131) English language Teaching; Ndah, Ayodele, and Banjo (2007, Pg 63 and 71) Exam focus on English (for the passages, see appendix one) these were selected because the:

- i. Passages were interesting in nature.
- ii. Subject matter of the passages was of interest to both male and female students.

- iii. Content of passages were educative and informative
- iv. Content could adequately provide some of the needed items for the tests.

In all, there were twenty-five test items, drawn from the passages, made up of thirteen multiple – choice test items and twelve open-ended test items. The reason for selecting the multiple choice test items was because it was suitable for measuring complex abilities, such as understanding and thinking, as well as objective scoring. Multiple choice questions have content validity and high reliability of scoring which are preferred in most research questions (Sambo, 2005). While the reasons for selecting the open-ended items were because, it afforded the learner the freedom to demonstrate the ability to select information, evaluate it, organize it and integrate ideas in writing the answers. Some of the test items were taken from the passages, while the researcher constructed some as well. (For the test items, see appendix one). The treatment stages are depicted in Table 3.5 below:

Table 3.5: Treatment stages for experimental group

Administer pre-test for control and experimental groups	Teach understanding figurative usage 2 weeks	Teach identification of main idea 2 weeks	Teach discovering text organization 2 weeks	Teach recognizing a writer’s point of view 2 weeks	Administer test for experimental group	Control and experimental groups scores compared Pre and post-test scores compared
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3.5.1 Administration of Instruments

A pre-test was administered to both control and experimental groups by the researcher with the assistance of two teachers. The experimental group was taught the sub-skills of reading comprehension enriched lessons while the control group had their normal class lessons taught by their teachers. The former was taught for six weeks

instead of the planned eight weeks because of the principal's objection. The scores of the students were recorded. At the end of the six weeks the experimental group was administered post-test and the scores recorded and compared, to find the effect of teaching the sub-skills of understanding figurative usage, finding main idea, discovering text organization and recognizing a writer's point of view on inferential ability of the students through the students performances.

3.5.2 Treatment of Experimental Group

(a) Understanding figurative usage

This group was made up of students taught figurative language instruction through the process of scaffolding by using a figurative language poster.

Step I The teacher gives direct and explicit instruction on types of figurative language through definitions and examples of each in a context.

Step II The teacher gives a four step process for finding meaning in figurative language by listing the steps on the board after which the students read it out.

Step III The teacher draws a figurative language poster that illustrates the literal and figurative meanings of the saying. The students read through the poster.

Step IV The teacher discusses with the students when and why figurative language is used.

Step V The students engage in individual exercises on what has been taught.

For samples of the lessons, see appendix 2

(b) Finding the main idea

Step I The teacher assists students' previous knowledge by asking them to explain what is meant by main idea in a text. The teacher listens to the

students attempt and assists learners in rephrasing and re-casting where necessary.

Step II The teacher read out a text while the students listen. The teacher model for the students how to find the one sentence in a paragraph that contains the central thought, which is the topic sentence. The teacher explains that this is one way of finding a main idea.

Step III The teacher with the students read a selected text focusing on the introductory and concluding paragraph. The teacher asks the students to read carefully, at their own pace looking for the main idea. This will help the students to learn that main idea could also be picked from the introductory or concluding paragraphs.

Step IV The teacher and the students read a paragraph after which the teacher asks the students to state the gist of the text in one sentence. After which the teacher assists the students to rephrase and re-cast sentences where necessary. This is a challenging way to get students to try to distill the essential from the many details.

Step V The teacher gives the students a selection from which titles and headings have been removed and ask them to write their own headings or title.

For sample of the lessons see appendix 2.

(c) Discovering Organization

Step I The teacher assists the students' previous knowledge by asking the students to explain what is meant by text organization. The teacher listens to the students attempt and assists students in rephrasing and re-casting where necessary.

- Step II The teacher and the students read a passage taken from their English text. The teacher asks the students to identify a topic sentence in one of the paragraphs while the teacher listens and assists in rephrasing and re-casting where necessary.
- Step III The teacher asks the students to identify words and phrases in that paragraph, which point to the main idea. The teacher listens, and assists students to re-cast and rephrase where necessary.
- Step IV The teacher asks the students to identify the organizational clue, which is sentence connectors like: in addition, meanwhile, afterwards. The teacher listens and assists in identifying them where necessary.
- Step V The teacher asks the students to draw out the organizational outline of a given text, while the teacher goes round checking that it is being done correctly.

(d) Recognizing a writers point of view

- Step I The teacher prepares the students mind by asking them to explain the phrase; to recognize a writer's point of view. The teacher listens and assists students in rephrasing and re-casting where necessary, or giving the definition out rightly.
- Step II The teacher reads aloud from a selected text in their English language book, while the students listen and follow the reading in their own books.
- Step III The teacher stops frequently as they share the book to share inferential thinking with the students through modeling using a stem such as I can infer that ... Or, based on what we have read so far, I can infer ...
- Step IV The teacher assists the students to realize that it is all the information in a

give text combined with prior knowledge where available, that is summed up and used to infer the author's view point on an issue.

Step V The teacher assists the students to independently recognize a point of view from a piece of given text by giving the students a reading material in which they should be able to infer and recognize the writer's point of view.

(e) Background Experience

Step I The teacher puts up a diagram on inference equation on the board.

Step II The teacher gives a clear definition of the word inference.

Step III A passage is read from their textbook. The teacher stop frequently to share inferential thinking with the students.

Step IV The teacher considers making an achieve chart that captures different types of inference which helps to demonstrate and model kinds of inferences.

Step V The teacher extends understanding by prompting learners to make inferences through shared, guided reading or independent reading by illustrating for them how to hold their own thinking independent reading time by recording inferences and justifications in columns.

3.6 Pilot Study

The pilot study was carried out in G.S.S Zaria, one of the schools not in use for the main study. The purpose of the pilot study was to further validate the instruments for the data collection. That is its reliability and validity for the tests. In view of this, the instruments were first of all submitted to experts in the field to ascertain its face validity, and thereafter, they were pilot-tested. Ten students were used for the pilot study from the above named school.

The reliability of the instrument was analysed using the split half reliability test and the correlation coefficient calculated. The computed r-value for the correlation coefficient reliability test for the research instrument was 0.76. This showed an appreciable level of reliability.

3.6.1 Observation from Pilot Study

The pilot study provided useful insight to the whole study. It was observed that more than half of the students shunned the questions on understanding figurative usage. The few who were bold to attempt the question was a guess work of partly correct response. Some of the students could not even answer simple questions on the other levels of comprehension. The pilot test revealed the need for modification, to remove ambiguities such as:

1. Which of the following defines main idea in the passage? This question was modified to read as “Select the answer which best describes the above passage as summary of main idea?”

2. What do you guess the topic sentence of paragraph 2 to be? This question was modified to read as “Give the topic sentence of paragraph 2.”

3.7 Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher collected a letter of introduction from the department, which gave her access to relevant information like schools and enrolment data, from the ministry of Education, Zaria Zonal Office. With the letter of introduction, the researcher was able to visit the schools concerned to discuss before hand and have rapport with the teachers and assistance solicited.

After the necessary preambles and the initial lack of interest, with the complaint that their classes would be disrupted. The teachers who served as the research assistants agreed to administer the test to both the control and experimental groups, to test for equivalence in ability. The results, which were analyzed and compared showed that the

pre-experimental, performed better in two of the four sub-skills and inferential, while the control also performed better, in the other remaining two sub-skills. On the whole, the mean scores of both groups, were poor compared to the total score of twenty-five. As such, none of the two groups was superior to the other in ability. The researcher then conducted the treatment lessons for the experimental group for a period of six weeks, instead of the pre-planned eight weeks, because of complaints. The teaching concluded, they were then tested by the research assistants using the same set of questions. The pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group were then analyzed and compared, to show if there was any gain in performance as a result of treatment.

3.8 Procedure for Data Analysis

The data for this study were analyzed using descriptive statistic and One Way Analysis of Variance(ANOVA) statistical tools. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the research questions, while Anova was used to test the three hypothesis. Anova was chosen because it compares means of variables and the number of students involved was greater than thirty.

3.9 Summary

This chapter on methodology and procedures used for conducting the study included: The research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, research instrument, pilot study, procedure for data collection, as well as the procedure for data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected in the course of the study. The analysis was on the performances of learners (control and experimental groups) on the sub-skills and inferential ability, in relation to the three research questions and three hypothesis raised in chapter one. The data was generated from the comprehension passages on multiple choice tests and open ended tests, to test the reading comprehension sub-skills and inferential ability. Descriptive Statistics was used to analyze the three research questions and a one way Analysis of Variances (ANOVA) was used to test the three hypotheses. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The acceptance of this level was based on the works of several education researchers like (Whawo, 1992 and Sambo, 2005). ANOVA was chosen because it was most appropriate as it compares means of four variables or sub-skills and the number of students involved greater than thirty.

The findings of the data were analyzed and discussed. In the first section of the chapter, the three research questions were answered. In the second section, the three hypotheses were tested

4.2 Data Presentation

4.2.1 Research Questions

The following three research questions were answered in this research work as follows:

(a) Research Question 1

What is the performance of students in each of the four sub-skills and inferential ability?

Table 4.01 showing comparison of the two groups N, Mean, and Standard Deviation of the figurative language usage sub-skill.

<u>Group</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Control	126	3.44	2.88
<u>Pre –exptal</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>3.69</u>	<u>3.33</u>

Table 4.01 revealed that the pre-experimental group had a higher mean of 3.69 compared to the control group mean of 3.44. This indicates that the pre-experimental performed better in the sub-skill of figurative language usage.

Table 4.02 showing comparison of the two groups N, Mean, and Standard Deviation of the finding the main idea sub-skill.

<u>Group</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Control	126	4.29	3.32
<u>Pre –exptal</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>4.22</u>	<u>2.93</u>

Table 4.02 revealed that the control group had a higher mean of 4.29 compared to the pre-experimental group mean of 4.22. This indicates that the control performed better in the sub-skill of finding the main idea.

Table 4.03 showing comparison of the two groups N, Mean, and Standard Deviation of the text organization sub-skill.

<u>Group</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Control	126	4.44	2.83
<u>Pre –exptal</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>4.61</u>	<u>3.03</u>

Table 4.03 revealed that the pre-experimental group had a higher mean of 4.61 compared to the control group mean of 4.44. This indicates that the pre-experimental performed better in the sub-skill of text organization.

Table 4.04 showing comparison of the two groups N, Mean, and Standard Deviation of the writer's point of view sub-skill.

<u>Group</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Control	126	4.25	2.62
<u>Pre -exptal</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>2.77</u>

Table 4.04 revealed that the pre-experimental group had a lower mean of 4.00 compared to the control group mean of 4.23. This indicates that the control performed better in the sub-skill of text organization.

To show the relationship between the four sub-skills and inferential ability the overall mean of the sub-skills is 4.01 compared to inferential ability mean of 2.82. This shows that before treatment the students performed poorly.

Table 4.05 showing comparison of the two groups N, Mean, and Standard Deviation of the inferential ability.

<u>Group</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Control	126	2.82	1.83
<u>Pre -exptal</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>3.69</u>	<u>2.38</u>

Table 4.05 revealed that the pre-experimental group had a higher mean of 3.69 compared to the control group mean of 2.82. This indicates that the pre-experimental performed better in inferential ability.

In answering the research question the pre-experimental group performed better in figurative language usage (3.69) and text organization (4.61) while the control equally performed better in finding main idea (4.29) and writer's point of view (4.25) sub-skills. The pre-experimental group outperformed the control group in inferential ability. Although, these mean scores are poor when compared to the total score of 25.

(b) Research Question 2

What is the difference in the performance of students taught reading comprehension sub-skills and those not taught?

Table 4.06 showing comparison of the two groups N, Mean, and Standard Deviation of the figurative language usage sub-skill.

<u>Group</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Pre-exptal	92	3.69	3.33
Post –exptal	92	12.22	3.58

Table 4.06 revealed that the post-experimental group had a higher mean of 12.22 compared to the pre-experimental group mean of 3.69. This indicates that the post-experimental performed better in the sub-skill of figurative language usage.

Table 4.07 showing comparison of the two groups N, Mean, and Standard Deviation on finding the main idea sub-skill.

<u>Group</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Pre-exptal	92	4.22	2.93
Post –exptal	92	11.78	3.72

Table 4.07 revealed that the post-experimental group had a higher mean of 11.78 compared to the pre-experimental group mean of 4.22. This indicates that the post-experimental performed better in the sub-skill of finding the main idea.

Table 4.08 showing comparison of the two groups N, Mean, and Standard Deviation on the text organization sub-skill.

<u>Group</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Pre-exptal	92	4.61	2.44
Post –exptal	92	11.04	3.43

Table 4.08 revealed that the post-experimental group had a higher mean of 11.04 compared to the pre-experimental group mean of 4.61. This indicates that the post-experimental performed better in the sub-skill of text organization.

Table 4.09 showing comparison of the two groups N, Mean, and Standard Deviation on the writer's point of view sub-skill.

<u>Group</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Pre-exptal	92	3.69	2.38
Post -exptal	92	11.83	3.19

Table 4.09 revealed that the post-experimental group had a higher mean of 11.83 compared to the pre-experimental group mean of 3.69. This indicates that the post-experimental performed better in the sub-skill of recognizing a writer's point of view.

Table 4.010 showing comparison of the two groups N, Mean, and Standard Deviation on the inferential ability

<u>Group</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Pre-exptal	92	3.69	3.69
Post -exptal	92	10.92	2.87

Table 4. 10 revealed that the post-experimental group had a higher mean of 10.92 compared to the pre-experimental group mean of 3.69. This indicates that the post-experimental performed better in the inferential ability.

To answer the research question 2, the above results showed that the post -experimental had higher mean values compared to that of pre-experimental group on the four sub-skills and inferential ability. It is obvious that those taught reading comprehension sub-skills (the post experimental group) performed better than those not taught (pre-experimental) as a result of the treatment.

(c) Research Question 3

What is the difference in the pre and post tests of the experimental group based on gender?

Table 4.11 showing comparison of the two groups N, Mean, and Standard Deviation of the Boys.

<u>Group</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Pre-exptal	46	4.39	1.51
Post –exptal	46	11.41	1.92

Table 4.11 revealed that the post-experimental group had a higher mean of 11.41 compared to the pre-experimental group mean of 4.39. This indicates that the post-experimental performed better .

Table 4.12 showing comparison of the two groups N, Mean, and Standard Deviation of the Girls.

<u>Group</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Pre-exptal	46	3.84	1.77
Post –exptal	46	12.07	1.94

Table 4.12 revealed that the post-experimental group had a higher mean of 12.07 compared to the pre-experimental group mean of 3.84. This indicates that the post-experimental performed better. The above results showed that the girls performed better (mean 12.07) compared to the boys(mean 11.41).

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

In this section, the three hypotheses were tested using the one way ANOVA.

4.3.1 Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis stated in the null form is: There is no significant difference in the performance of students in each of the four sub-skills and inferential ability. This is stated statistically as:

$$H_0: U_1 = U_2$$

$$H_1 = U_1 = U_2$$

Where H_0 is the null hypothesis and H_1 is the alternative hypothesis.

Where U_1 is the mean score of the first group and U_2 is the mean score of the second group.

If the F-calculated is greater than F-table, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. The alternative hypothesis is then accepted.

Table 4.13 showing ANOVA comparison of the mean squares, sum of squares, F calculated, F table, N, Df of the sub-skills.

source of variation	df	sum of squares	mean squares	F- cal	sig.
Treatments	3	66.262	22.087	1.820	0.143
Errors	364	2986.690	12.133		
Total	367	3204.481			

Table 4.13 revealed that the analysis at 5% level of significance , F-calculated 1.820 is less than F-table 2.62. Therefore, the null hypothesis is upheld. There is no significant difference in their scores on the sub-skills.

Table 4.14 showing ANOVA comparison of the mean squares, sum of squares, F calculated, F table, N, Df and of inferential ability.

source of variation	df	sum of squares	mean squares	F- cal	Sig.
Treatments	3	73.778	24.593	2.878	0.036
Errors	500	4272.000	8.544		
Total	503	4345.778			

The analysis shows that F- calculated is 2.878 and the F-table is 2.62 at 5% level of significance. Therefore, F-calculated (2.878) is greater than F-table(2.62) the null hypothesis of there is no significant difference in their scores for the inferential ability is rejected. The alternative hypothesis, there is significant difference in the scores on inferential ability is accepted.

4.3.2 Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis stated in the null form is:

There is no significant difference between the scores of students taught comprehension sub-skills and those not taught.

This stated statistically as:

$$H_0: U_1 = U_2$$

$$H_1 : U_1 \neq U_2$$

Where H_0 is the null hypothesis and Where H_1 is the alternative hypothesis.

Where U_1 is the mean scores of the pre-treated and U_2 is the mean score of the post tested.

Table 4.15 showing ANOVA comparison of the mean squares, sum of squares, F calculated, F table, N, Df for those taught and those not taught.

source of variation	df	sum of squares	mean squares	F- cal	sig.
Treatments	1	2647.848	2647.848	809.812	0.001
Errors	182	3242.935	3.270		
Total	183	3242.935		

Table 4.15 shows that F-calculated 809.812 is greater than F-table 3.89 at 5% level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis which states there is significant difference in the performance scores of those taught the four sub-skills and those not taught, as a result of the treatment, is upheld.

4.3.3 Hypothesis 3

The third null hypothesis is stated as: There is no significant difference between the scores of students in the pre- and post-tests based on gender.

This is statistically stated as:

$$H_0 = U_1 = U_2$$

$$H_1 = U_1 \neq U_2$$

Where H_0 is the null hypothesis and H_1 is the alternative hypothesis

U_1 is the mean of the pre-treated students and U_2 is the mean of the post-treated students.

If the F-calculated is greater than F-table, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. The alternative hypothesis is then accepted.

Table 4.16 showing ANOVA comparison of the mean squares, sum of squares, F calculated, F table, N, Df for the Boys.

source of variation	df	sum of squares	mean squares	F- cal	Sig.
Treatments	1	1207.510	1207.510	403.246	0.000
Errors	96	287.469	2.994		
Total	97	1494.980			

Table 4.17 showing ANOVA comparison of the mean squares, sum of squares, F calculated, F table, N, Df and for the Girls.

source of variation	df	sum of squares	mean squares	F- cal	Sig.
Treatments	1	1457.163	1457.163	421.129	0.000
Errors	84	1747.814	3.460		
Total	85	1747.814			

Tables 4.16 and Table 4.17 revealed that F-calculated in both 403.246 and 421.129 for the Boys and Girls respectively are greater than F-table 3.86 at 5% level of significance of the scores for both pre and post test of the two groups. The null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, which states that there is significant difference in the scores of pre and post tests for both Boys and Girls. However, there is no significant difference between the performances of Boys and Girls at 5% level of significance.

4.4 Discussions

The main focus of the study was to ascertain the effect of selected reading comprehension sub-skills on the inferential ability of senior secondary school students. The discussion therefore focused on:

- i. The performance of the control and experimental group on the selected sub- skills and inferential ability.
- ii. The performance of the pre and post experimental group on the sub-skills.
- iv. The performance of the pre and post experimental group based on gender.

4.4.1 Performance of Students (pre-experimental and control) on the selected sub-skills and inferential ability

In comparing the performances of students in the pre-experimental and control group on the sub- skills and inferential ability, the results in Table 4.13. reveals that the analysis at 5% level of significance, F calculated 1.820 is less than F table 2.62. Therefore, the null hypothesis is upheld. There is no significant difference in the performance of students in each of the four sub-skills. While the results in table 4.14 shows that F calculated is 2.878 and the F table is 2.62 at 5% level of significance. Therefore, F calculated (2.878) is greater than F table (2.62). Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant in scores of students (control and pre-experimental) on inferential ability is rejected. The alternative hypothesis of there is significant difference in the scores of students on inferential ability is accepted.

In calculating the difference in scores for the two groups, as shown in the Tables, result indicates the control group as having 16.67 while the pre-experimental group has 16.52. This justifies the fact that the samples used in treatment are of equal ability with the entire target population. Therefore their entry behaviour were the same. This finding agrees with (Daramola, 2006 and Whawo, 2000) who says that random sampling is that method of selecting a sample from a population in such a way that, every member of population has an equal chance of being selected and no choice should be pre-determined. Apart from using the pre-test for both groups to determine un-biased

sampling, the peculiarity in this finding is the assumption that some students are better than others, should not hold water for the classroom teacher handling any topic. At the same time, no student should be a write –off or never do well for the classroom teacher.

4.4.2 Performance of Students Taught Reading Comprehension Sub-skills and Those not Taught

(a) In calculating the difference in scores for the two groups on figurative as shown in table 4.06 results indicates the post experimental group as having 12.22 while the pre-experimental has 3.69. The difference between 12.22 and 3.69 was great enough to be considered as a significant difference between the two groups. As such it was obvious that the post-experimental group has twice the score of the pre-experimental group. In other words, the treatment on post-experimental group was effective, and of immense benefit to the students, whom at the pre-test stage, mostly abandoned or did a guess work on figurative usage. The need, for figurative language instruction cannot be overemphasized. This finding agrees with Palmer and Brooks (2004) and Monroe, (2005) who all said that, inability to interpret figurative language leads to a breakdown in text comprehension, as learners spend a period reading with the purpose of searching for expressions that makes one stop and really visualize what one reads. It also agrees with William (1990) who says that inferring deeper meaning brings into play ability such as understanding figurative usage.

The study however disagrees with Kurland (2000) who noted that the need to read ideas not words comes from the use of figurative language; this is because, when there is communication breakdown, the reader is forced to begin to look at the individual words to see if any meaning can be deduced before putting two and two together.

The strength of this finding is that figurative usage should be taught as a topic in English language classrooms, not only when such usage are encountered in passages before an attempt will be made to explain it. The place and teaching of figurative language usage in reading comprehension classes is not emphasized by other research works.

The peculiarity of the finding on figurative usage is the urgent need for students to be able to interpret figurative usage. This is in agreement with the chief examiner's report on West African Examinations Council (WACE) Results and National Examinations Council (NECO) Results of 2004 – 2006 in which they stated that majority of the candidates could not answer correctly, questions which dealt with Irony in the passage.

(b) In calculating the difference in scores for the two groups on finding main idea as shown in Table 4.07 result indicates the post-experimental group as having 11.78, while the pre-experimental has 4.22. The difference between 11.78 and 4.22 was great enough to be considered as a significant difference between the two. The post-experimental group has almost three times the value of pre-experimental. This serves as a pointer to the effectiveness of treatment on the post-experimental group. In the pre-test, some of the students could not so much as pick the correct option from the alternatives to multiple – choice questions, but could so much as write a suitable title for a passage in the open-ended test. This proved that with instruction, they have a clearer picture of the process involved in identifying a main idea.

This finding agrees with Harris (1962) who evolved many kinds of practices that could be used to develop the skill in grasping main idea which the study carefully

included. The study also agrees with William, (1990) who listed finding main idea as one of the abilities needed to arrive at a deeper meaning.

- (c) In calculating the difference in scores for the two groups on discovering text organization as shown in Table 4.08, results indicated the post-experimental group as having 11.04, while the pre-experimental has 4.61 showing great difference to be considered as a significant difference between the two. The post-experimental group has two times the value of pre-experimental group. This again suggests the benefit of treatment on the post-experimental group. In the pre-test the questions that were attempted were the ones on multiple-choice tests. However in the post-test, they were more confident to tackle the open-ended tests which was not a guess work. This finding agrees with Hoyt, 2005 and Harris, 1962 who have said discovering text organization results in deeper-thinking and help determine importance.
- (d) In calculating the difference in scores for the two groups on recognizing a writer's point of view, as shown in Table 4.09, results indicates the post-experimental group as having 11.83 while the pre-experimental group had 3.69. The difference between 11.83 and 3.69 was great enough to be considered as a significant difference between the two. The post-experimental group has three times, the value of pre-experimental. This again could be as a result of instruction given to the post-experimental group from which they benefited. In the pre-test, most of the students did not attempt the question on recognizing a writer's point of view in the open-ended test, but were able to do so in the post-test. This finding agrees with Monroe (2005) who says, that when learners read from a writer's point of view, their understanding of, and appreciation for the text they are reading increases.

(e) In calculating the difference in scores for the two groups, on inferential ability as shown in Table 4.10, results show the post-experimental group as having 10.92 compared to the pre-experimental group with 3.69. As such there was significant difference in the scores of the two groups. This could be attributed to the careful planning and teaching of the reading comprehension sub-skills, which impacted on students' inferential ability. This finding agrees with Williams (1999), model abilities for inferring deeper meaning in reading comprehension, adopted for this study.

4.4.3. Performance of the Pre and Post-Experimental Group based on Gender

The performance of students in the pre and post experimental group based on gender as shown on Tables 4.16 and 4.17 revealed that F calculated in both 403.246 and 421.129 for the Boys and Girls respectively, are greater than F table 3.86 at 5% level significance of the scores for both pre and post of the group. Thus the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis, which states that there is significant difference in the scores of pre and post tests for both Boys and Girls accepted. However, there is no significant difference between the performance of Boys and Girls at 5% level of significance.

In calculating the difference in scores for the group, as shown in Table 4.11 and Table 4.12, results indicates the post experimental group as having 11.41(Boys) 12.07(Girls) compared to the pre-experimental group with 4.39(Boys) 3.84(Girls) respectively. This proves, that the slight difference in the performance between the Boys and Girls is not strong enough to indicate any superiority in the ability of one over the other. It means both groups were positively impacted after being taught. This agrees with Kilan and Powit(2000), who in their study on the "The effects of time induced stress on

making inferences in text comprehension” observed that there are no statistically significant differences in performance between Boys and Girls on the test as a whole.

The major finding in the study was that generally, knowledge in the sub-skills greatly enhanced inferential ability of the students. This was seen in the analysis of the results of the two groups used for the research findings. As their scores in the sub-skills increased, so did their scores in the exercise of inferential ability. This finding agrees with Palmer and Brooks (2004) and Monroe (2005), who says, inability to interpret figurative language leads to a breakdown in text communication, which could also be a stumbling block to inference making. It also agrees with Williams (1999) who says, inferring deeper meaning, brings into

play ability such as understanding figurative usage. Another strong point of the study is, that since the process of identifying a main idea itself in a piece of writer-up require the ability to infer directly or indirectly. It is therefore clear, that a student who is able to identify a main idea as different from supporting details would have no problems with questions that demand the exercise of inferential ability. This is one area other research works have not talked about, a part from Williams (1999) who only listed main idea as a step to inference. The strength of the finding on recognizing a writer’s point of view is that learner’s should be encouraged and taught to read from a writer’s point of view by entering into partnership with the author. This agrees with the works of Monroe (2005) and Regie (2003) who says that when readers see text through the eyes of a writer, they savor the fine points, think about meaning and more deeply.

The disparity between this work and other research works on building inferential ability is that none of them worked on these reading comprehension sub-skills of understanding figurative usage, finding main idea, discovering organization and recognizing a writer point of view as a necessary foundation to building inferential

ability, for the level of learners used in this study. As the years go by, these sub-skills become fused and useful for more advanced inference making. This argument agrees with Stein (1979) and Downing (1982) who says that skilled readers, often use particular sub-skills of their reading skill simultaneously over the year and these sub-skills originally distinct become fused and no longer activated separately.

4.5 **Summary**

In this chapter, the data collected from the pre-experimental and post-experimental group of students on the four reading comprehension sub-skills of understanding figurative usage, finding main idea, discovering text organization and recognizing a writer's point of view and inferential ability were analyzed using the Anova statistical tool. The three null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The three research questions were also answered. The results showed that there were significant differences in the performance of pre and post-treated group of students. In other words treatment was effective.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Introduction

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.2 Summary

The major problem of focus in this study was to ascertain the effectiveness of selected reading comprehension sub-skills on inferential ability.

The study sought to achieve the following:

- (a) To ascertain the effect of understanding figurative usage on inferential ability.
- (b) To ascertain the effect of finding main idea on inferential ability.
- (c) To ascertain the effect of discovering organization on inferential ability .
- (d) To ascertain the effect of recognizing a writer's point of view on inferential ability.

In order to achieve the stated objectives, three research questions and three null hypotheses were stated as follows:

- (a) What is the performance of students in each of the four sub-skills and inferential ability?
- (b) What is the difference in the performance of students taught reading comprehension sub-skills and those not taught?
- (c) What is the difference in the pre-test and post-test of students in the experimental group on the basis of gender ?

The three null hypotheses formulated for this study were:

- (a) There is no significant difference in the performance of students in each of the four sub-skills and inferential.
- (b) There is no significant difference between the scores of students taught reading comprehension sub-skills and those not taught.

- (c) There is no significant difference between the scores of students in the pre-test and post-test based on gender.

The data for this research were collected through tests on multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions. A control, pre-test and post-test experimental design was used for this study. The pre-test was administered before the treatment. The post test was administered after the treatment. Student's scores were recorded.

The One Way Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) was to reject or accept null hypothesis earlier stated. The mean and standard deviation of student's scores were calculated. The F-calculated values were also compared with the F-table values and were found to be significant. The result of the analysis has shown the following:

- (a) The control and pre-experimental group performance on the sub-skills and inferential are same.
- (b) The treatment on the sub-skills also had positive effect on the post-experimental group.
- (c) The treatment on the sub-skills also had positive effect on the post-experimental group based on gender.

These findings have important implication for teachers in the sense that teachers need to adopt classroom approaches that should be concerned with reading strategies for different purposes. This is because; each of the sub-skill had a different role to play in inferential building. While the figurative skill enhances the interpretation of non-literal usage, finding main idea skill enhances the ability to distil chaff from grain. Text organization enhances sequence, while writer's point of view skill enhances inference in reading text.

5.3 Implications

5.3.1 Implications for Teachers

1. Comprehension instruction once viewed as a black or white proposition should be regarded as a complex challenge. It is far above yes/no answer type of comprehension.
2. There is the need to see the importance of explicit instruction in reading comprehension sub-skill, because they are a necessary foundation to building inferential ability. Development on such sub-skills can be an attempt at overriding inferential ability stumbling blocks.
3. It is imperative for the teacher to establish the purpose for reading during each reading comprehension lesson, so as to have a focus on a specific skill to build on.
4. If the goal of language instruction is to produce overall efficiency in educational pursuit, then the place of helping learners develop their inferential ability cannot be overemphasized.
5. By effectively teaching the sub-skills of figurative language, main idea, text organization and writer's point of view, as a process to building inferential ability, teachers model for learners how to move away from narrow, fact based questions and answers and set more global purposes for reading.
6. The classroom teacher, should also try to address the complex problem of developing various comprehension abilities specifically inference.
7. Motivation is one of the most powerful tools for students' success. Teachers, should endeavor to motivate their students by creating activities, which include the students from the beginning to the end of a reading text. This is because

motivated learners make choices to stay engaged, and to persist because of their interest and the expectation of outcome.

8. The 20% percent mark assigned to reading comprehension in Examination is not enough justification not to take the teaching of reading comprehension seriously.

5.3.2 Implication for Students:

1. The students should be encouraged to engage in wider reading. Reading should not only be during the English language lesson.
2. They should appreciate the fact that they need deeper level comprehension of texts to be able to face the complexity of academic challenge as they advance.
3. Students should equally see the need to learn and understand figurative usage as this will help them to confidently tackle questions that demand the knowledge of figurative speech.

5.3.3 Implication for Textbook Writers

1. There is need to know that, it is not just enough to title comprehension passage, “Reading for inference” without constructing comprehension questions that really demand the exercise of inferential ability.
2. It is necessary for teachers to equally study comprehension passages to be taught in class. This will help them make up for deficient areas of the text-book.
3. Textbook writers should involve the classroom teacher when writing books to be used in schools. It is not enough to use arm-chair teachers who are not directly in the field.

5.3.4 Implication for Curriculum Planners

There is the need for curriculum planners to take into cognizance that there are specific sub-skills in reading comprehension which could serve as a necessary foundation for the higher skills like inferential. For this reason they need to try as much as possible to create activities on such sub-skills to ensure enough practice. They should ensure, that the English curriculum in which reading comprehension, is one of the things spelt out to be studied is further broken down to include skills and sub-skills that would help, facilitate learners reading comprehension in all subjects for overall academic success.

It is also pertinent that curriculum planners, involve classroom teachers in the planning process. This will help to give further insight into learners problem areas in reading comprehension, and a possible way forward to overcoming it.

5.4 Conclusion

The Reading comprehension sub-skills of understanding figurative usage, finding main idea, discovering text organization and recognizing a writer's point of view were found to have greatly enhanced the performance of the post-treated group as against the pre-treated group. The combination of the sub-skills gave the students the opportunity to have interaction with different levels of comprehension. These played significant role in their ability to answer the inferential questions, which was the focus of the study.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study recommendations are made:

1. Effort should be made to assist the learners to achieve comprehension, a basic step to inferential ability by breaking down every reading passage on material into some sub-skills.
2. Attention should not be given to reading competence alone. The place of comprehension without which inference cannot take place should equally be looked into by both teachers and learners.
3. When students' inferential ability is developed, they would be able to interpret and tackle the demands of the questions. Their deficiency here will be a thing of past.
4. The aims and objectives of WAEC and NECO syllabus should always be handy as a guide to achieving their stated objectives. The chief examiner's report of these two bodies, will also serve as a guide to know the areas students are mostly deficient.
5. There is also the need for workshops from time to time for English Language teachers to enhance their teaching skills.

5.6 Areas of Further Study

It is suggested that:

1. Similar study be carried out on students from a different socio-economic background. This will give room for a comparative analysis of the study.
2. Other researchers could carry out similar studies in other parts of the country.
3. Similar studies be carried out using such variables as age, teacher competence, school environment/facilities to determine their effect on inferential ability.

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APPENDIX 1

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Time allowed: 1hr 30 mins

Instructions

- 1. Read the passages carefully and respond to the questions that follow by circling the correct option in questions 1 to 13.**
- 2. For questions 14 to 25, give your answers in simple correct English on the attached sheet of paper.**

PASSAGE 1

This book is about change and how we adapt to it. It is about those who seem to thrive on change, who crest its waves joyfully, as well as those multitude of others who resist it or seek flight from it. It is about our capacity to adapt. It is about the future and the shock that its arrival brings.

1. Select the answer which best describes the following statement as summary of the main idea in the passage. (MI)
 - a. it is about people and reactions to change
 - b. it is about people's acceptance of change
 - c. it is about people's non acceptance of change
 - d. it is about people and change
2. What is the topic sentence of the paragraph? (TO)
 - a. change and how we adapt to it
 - b. those who seem to thrive on change
 - c. the multitude of others who resist it.

- d. the future and the shock that its arrival brings
3. Which of the following best explains the phrase “who crest its waves”? (FIG)
- a. who cherishes continuous change
 - b. who are worried about change
 - c. who succeeds in change
 - d. who seek flight from change
4. Which of the following do you think best represent the writer’s point of view? (WPV)
- a. change brings uncertainty
 - b. multitudes resist change
 - c. capacity to adapt to change
 - d. many accept change
5. What is implied by the phrase; “the shock that its arrival brings”? (INF)
- a. Beautiful things
 - b. bad tidings
 - c. shocking revelation
 - d. uncertainty

PASSAGE II

Do the present policies on those who commit crimes reflect a class war? For long, people have alleged that certain laws discriminate against some members of the society while such laws favour others. Besides, some sociologists also claim that some members of society are more prone to some specific crimes than others. So, our opening question is pertinent.

When we realized that armed robbery and similar offences require the use of brute force, it immediately becomes clear that these are offences almost exclusive to the

masculine world. The offences are thus sex-bound. Besides, the need to be physically strong and agile tends to exclude the upper middle age and the elderly; so, age is also a factor.

Moreover, members of the class, who at best have some financial returns to rely on, hardly ever have the urge to resort to violence. This tends to limit violent crimes to the unemployed, poor and desperate males in their late teens, twenties or early thirties. Indeed, if elderly citizens are involved, they function as the barons, the financiers, who sit back at home while they let loose the dogs of vandalism and death. They provide the money and tools for the frontline criminals.

Similarly, drug pushing tends to be more prevalent among the weaker sex, especially ladies in their twenties. They are biological more attractive, and hence more likely to wade through the airport and border posts while hiding deadly grammes of hard drugs within one or their bodily cervices. Again, where the older citizens are involved it is more as the barons, shielding the carriers from prosecution if they are caught. So this is another crime that is largely sex-bound.

Punishment for offences limited to the citizens on the lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder appears to be harder. So, robbery with violence attracts death, and punishment hard drugs attract long jail terms. Meanwhile, pen robbery and large scale fraud, offences which are invariably specific to the high class officials, do not attract severe penalties. Indeed, most culprits at this level manage to wriggle out of the net of the law. There thus appear to be significant reasons to answer our original questions in the affirmative.

6. According to the writer, two yardsticks used to categorize violent crimes are:

(WPV)

a. the working and the poor

- b. death and long jail terms
 - c. age and sex
 - d. social status and class
7. The topic sentence in the first paragraph is (TO)
- a. some members of the society are more prone to some specific crimes.
 - b. certain laws discriminate against some members of the society
 - c. our opening question is pertinent
 - d. present policies on those who commit crime reflect a class war.
8. What is the one sentence in paragraph three that contains the central thought?
(MI)
- a. they sit back at home while they let loose the days of vandalism and death.
 - b. they provide the money and tools
 - c. they function as barons
 - d. they finance the crimes and shield the carriers from prosecution.
9. According to the writer among what group of people are violent crimes most common? (WPV)
- a. the upper middle age and the elderly
 - b. members of the working class
 - c. the weaker sex.
 - d. males who are physically strong, young and unemployed.
10. The writer considers the punishment for the various crimes mentioned in the passage as: (WPV)
- a. fair; because the punishments are equal
 - b. fair; because pen robbery and large scale fraud do not attract severe penalties

c. unfair because punishment for offences limited to the citizens of the lower class appear to be harsher.

d. unfair; because armed robbery and small offences require the use of brute force

11. Give a suitable title to the passage (MI)

a. class war

b. crime and the law

c. sex-bound crimes

d. crime sponsors

12. What figure of speech is the expression “they let loose the dogs of vandalism and death”? (FIG)

a metaphor

b. hyperbole

c. simile

d. personification

13. What is the original question being referred to in the last paragraph? (INF)

a. is drug pushing more prevalent among the weaker sex?

b. are offences which require the use of brute force exclusive to the masculine world?

c. do the present policies on those who commit crime reflect a class war?

d. are old citizens involved in crime only act as the barons?

PASSAGE III

Her first evening at the college of education was eventful, not so much for what she did but for her reminiscences. She had travelled all day long from Ubeku, her village, to Lagos in a luxury bus. Most of the time the roaring engine had robbed her of a much

needed sleep. Throughout the journey, she reflected on her recent experiences with her male boss who gets her sacked for refusing his advances. She surveyed the world before her which held so much promise. Of one thing she was sure: she would not be found wanting in the academic tasks before her.

The noise would not let her sleep much as she tried. So, by the time the bus arrived in

Lagos, she was completely worn out, but was thankful that the ordeal was ending. It was then, when she got down, that she discovered one of her two bags was missing from the luggage compartment. The bag contained some of her clothes, shoes, materials for make-up and the like.

A very thorough search by the driver and other passengers yielded no positive result. It had apparently been taken away by either an absent-minded passenger who had alighted before. She did or by a thief. Sadly, she gave up and accepted her lot.

The sleep that had been denied her in the bus continued to elude her in bed. Alone in her smartly-painted quiet and well-furnished room, she found her mind continually going on adventures into her past. In vain she closed her eyes to woo the goddess of sleep, defiantly, her other self re-enacted long forgotten scenes, until finally, a little before midnight, and she found herself hand in hand with a man she had never met before. He was leading her to a beautiful garden with a quietly flowing stream in the valley. Somehow, though they did not speak to each other, their minds communicated and she loved him dearly. But all this was before they got to the biggest part of the stream; she found herself panting on her bed. It is always good to steer a middle course in whatever one does. Affairs of the heart should be a double-edged leacy.

14.the world before her which held so much promise. To what does this refer? (INF)
15. What was actually happening when she found herself with a man in the garden? (INF)
16. What is the topic sentence of the first paragraph? (TO)
17. Give a suitable title to the passage. (MI)
18. What is the one sentence in paragraph 3 that contain the central thought? (MI)
19. What picture of the character in the story has the writer successfully painted? (WPV)
20. What figure of speech is the expression To woo the goddess of sleep? (FIG)
21. In one sentence, give a summary of the passage. (TO)
22. Give the topic sentence of paragraph two. (TO)
23. By inference why do you think she found herself hand in hand with a man she had never met before? (INF)
24. What is meant by the figure of speech in the expressionto steer a middle course? (FIG)
25. What is meant by the figure of speech in the expression double-edged legacy? (FIG)

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX 2

Lesson Notes

Subject: Figurative Speech
Topic: Understanding figurative usage
Class: SS I
Duration: 40 mins.

Behavioural objective

At the end of this lesson, the students should be able to:

- i. List and define types of figurative language.
- ii. List the process involved in finding meaning in figurative language .
- iii Draw a figurative language poster that illustrates the literal and figurative meaning of saying
- iv Explain when and why figurative language is used

Previous Knowledge

The students encounter figurative usage in various Reading materials.

Presentation

Step I

The teacher asks the students to explain what is meant by figurative language.

The teacher assists the students by explaining that, a figure of speech is a trick that the writer uses to make you see the picture he saw, or feel what he felt. It is a language used to create a mental picture in the minds of our readers, so as to share our feelings or experience.

Step II

The teacher lists and define types of figurative language, after which the students add more examples of figurative language. They are as follows

i. Simile- where one thing or person is compared to another thing or person with the use of “like” or “as”, we call this figure of speech a simile. Example: He was as big as a house and his voice was like thunder.

ii. Metaphors are another form of comparison. It is an indirect comparison between two things that are essentially unlike. Example: He is a lion in the fight, old aged become a time of harvest.

iii. Personification, another kind of comparison is made by comparing a thing or qualify to a person. Example: Time marches on, Niger you are mighty indeed. Personification, then is pointing out the similarity between people and abstract ideas.

iv. Irony, when you use words that are the opposite of what you really mean. Example: Of course Ahmed won’t be late today, you know how punctual he always is. Ten minutes to closing.

v. Alliteration, use of several words beginning with the same sound. Example: through thick and thin, Peter Piper picked a peck.

Step III

The teacher lists the steps involved in scaffolding student’s access to figurative language as follows

- (i) Find the figurative language
- (ii) Try its literal meaning
- (iii) Find its intended meaning
- (iv) Significance of the phrase in real life

Step IV

The teacher draws the format of poster for scaffolding:

Figurative language	Literal meaning	Intended meaning	Connection to real life
Beeline	Bees fly in a certain way when running to their hive	* A straight line * Hurry from one place to another *Go rapidly or directly forward	The Beeline Express in Orlando, Florida, is a high way that connects Orlando to the east coast

Step V

Evaluation:

The teacher give the students some exercise on the various figures of speech first

(1) Explain what characteristics of the two things compared the writer wishes to emphasize in the following sentences

- a. The fat little baby waddled along like a duck
- b. The tired soldier staggard like drunken man
- c. Old age becomes a time of harvest.
- d. Time marches on
- e. Give one example each of Irony and alliteration.

Step V

The students read a selection which have no title and heading and afterwards write their own title or heading.

Subject: Reading comprehension
Topic: Discovering organization
Class: SS I
Duration: 40 mins.

Behavioral Objective

At the end of this lesson, the students should be able to:

- (i) Explain what text organization means
- (ii) Identify a topic sentence from a paragraph
- (iii) Identify words and phrases which point to the main idea of a paragraph
- (iv) Identify and list organization cues that are sentence connectors.

Previous Knowledge

The students have read passages that are organized in different ways.

Presentation

- Step I The students explain what is meant by text organization. The teacher adds: It is the ability to follow the structure of a passage. The reader recognizes the relationships among the main ideas and arranges them in the pattern of the entire subject. Discovering organization is applied in various kinds of reading: Putting together the different parts in descriptive passage; unraveling ideas in argumentative discourse; or following the development and analyzing the plot structure of novels and plays.
- Step II The teacher and the students read a passage taken from their English text, after which the students attempt identifying the topic sentence of the paragraph. The teacher assists where necessary.
- Step III The students read the paragraph again and try to identify words and phrases which point to the main idea. The teacher assists where necessary.
- Step IV The students read entire passage after which they try to identify the sentence connectors, which are part of organizational clues in a

writing. Examples from the passage are: First of all, for instance, thus, generally speaking, etc.

Step V

The students draw out the organization outline. These include the main idea and the supporting details. Example: Health and peace of mind are among life's greatest treasures (main idea)

Supporting details:

Every one holds the key

Health is wholeness

Disease is the absence of health

Any injurious habits should be corrected

Poor nutrition leads to poor physical structure

Subject **Reading Comprehension**
Topic: **Recognizing writer's point of view**
Class; **SS I**
Duration: **40 mins**

Behavioral Objective:

At the end of this lesson, the students should be able to :

- (i) Explain what is meant by a writer's point of view
- (ii) listen attentively to information
- (iii) Draw inference from a piece of information
- (iv) Put all the bits of information together to arrive at a writer's point of view.

Previous Knowledge

The students have read books written by different authors on different issues based on their view points.

Presentation

Step I The students explain what is meant by recognizing a writer's point of view. The teacher adds: It is the ability to see text through the eyes of a writer's, appreciate the fine points raised in the text, as well as arriving at a deeper meaning of the text

Step II The teacher reads a passage from their English text, while the students follow, and listen attentively to points raised and language used.

Step III The teacher stop frequently as they share the book and through modeling, share inferential thinking on the writer's point of view with the students.

Example: I can infer that or based on what we have read so far, I can infer that the government regulates the volume of commercials handed by national and local TV and radio stations to maintain checks and balances.

Step IV The teacher explain to the students that, though

it is not explicitly stated why government regulates the volume of commercial handled by these agencies. However from all the information given in the text combined with prior knowledge where available, that is summed up and used to infer the another's view point

Step V

The teacher asks the students to read the third paragraph of the passage on page 276 of their English text. And in one sentence write down what the writer feels about advertising and publicity?

Subject **Reading Comprehension**
Topic: **Inference**
Class; **SS I**
Duration: **40 mins**

Behavioral Objective:

At the end of this lesson, the student should be able to:

- (i) Explain inference equation
- (ii) Define Inference
- (iii) Explain different types of Inference
- (iv) Draw personal Inference

Definition:

(1) Diagram

Information (clues) + reader knowledge = inference

books the learner light

This diagram is called inference equation.

(2) Inference is being able to read between the lines, that is reading beyond the surface level. It is being able to bring out or identify facts that are hidden in a text as a result of careful reading.

Presentation: Step I: Understanding inferring

A passage on malaria is read. As the teacher chare the book, the teacher stop frequently to share inferential thinking with the students. The teacher model by selecting a stem such as I can infer that the exciting race being talked about is the battle to overcome malaria. Or based on what we have read so far, I can infer that only 223 million out of the 225 million that suffer malaria attach yearly survive.

The teacher help learners' to realize that it is all the information about fighting to eliminate mosquitoes that is used to infer that malaria is a killer disease. The teacher might use the inference equation to illustrate now the clues from the text were added to the teachers prior knowledge who then put the clues together, and created the ending inference: A killer disease.

Step II: Sample Archive Chart

The teacher might consider making an archive chart that captures different types of inferences which help to demonstrate and models kinds of inferences.

Example:

SAMPLE ARCHIVE CHART

INFERRING
A process that allows a reader to create personal and implied meaning from text.

Inferences are contracted form two sources:

- Readers prior knowledge or schema (about the world, genre, concepts, text structures)
- What actually appears in the text explicitly,

Readers make inferences about -----

- Author’s intentions and characteristics
- Conclusions suggested by a text
- Meaning of words or phrases
- Connotations in text
- Explanations for events
- Others -----

Step III: Extending understanding

This is a time when learners need to be prompted to make inferences, through shared, guided reading or independent reading. The teacher can begin to back away form explicit instruction. To help learners “hold their thinking” through independent reading time, they might record inferences and “justifications”, in columns. The teacher can simply illustrate thus:

Clues----- (from real life or from a book)	What I know -----	My inference
Example: There are big, black clouds in the sky.	Dark clouds can mean rain.	I think it is going to rain

Evaluation:

The teacher through independent and shared reading could ask the students to write down what they infer from the first three paragraphs that could free the entire world from malaria.

Expected answer: If it can disappear completely from African continent the world would be free.