EFFECTS OF DIRECT AND DISCOVERY METHODS ON MAIN IDEA COMPREHENSION ABILITY OF SELECTED SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

WILFRED ZHIKUR BALE

B.A. (Ed) ENGLISH, M.Ed. ENGLISH

PGED/UJ/10659/99

A thesis in the Department of ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION, Faculty of Education.
Submitted to the School of Postgraduate Studies, University of Jos, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (ENGLISH EDUCATION)

UNIVERSITY OF JOS

2009

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the research work for this thesis and the subsequent preparation of this thesis by (Wilfred Zhikur Bale, PGED /UJ/10659 /99), were carried out under my supervision.

---------- ----------

PROF. T. O. OYETUNDE **DR. I. BULUS**
SUPERVISOR Ag. HEAD OF DEPT ASSE

DATE ---------- DATE ----------

PROF. (MRS) ANDZAYI C. A.
DEAN, FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DATE ----------

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this work is the product of my own research efforts, undertaken under the supervision of Professor T. O. Oyetunde and has not been presented elsewhere for the award of Doctor of Philosophy. All sources have been duly distinguished and appropriately acknowledged.

---------- ----------

SIGNATURE **DATE**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Every achievement in life comes from God. It is God that gave me the admission. It is God that provided the financial resources with which to execute the programme. It is God that protected and preserved my life from the beginning to the end of this programme. My gratitude, therefore, first goes to God Almighty for His wonderful blessing.

My profound thanks also go to my hardworking supervisor, Professor T. O. Oyetunde, for his wonderful patience, love, advice and cooperation without which my dream could have been a mirage. I really appreciate all the pains Professor Oyetunde took to guide and train me in the methods of research and thesis writing, particularly in the area of referencing.

My unreserved appreciation is also extended to the Registrar of the university, Mr. Z. D. Galam; for his financial and moral support. I also wish to sincerely thank Professor (Mrs.) J. O. Mallum, former Dean, Faculty of Education, Professor (Mrs.) G. O. Bozimo, Professor E. D. Ozoji, Professor A. Nwoke, late Professor E. N Egbe and late Professor W. V. Famwang, for their advice and encouragement.

I am also highly indebted to Dr. M. N. Sule, Dr. (Mrs.) C. A. Ugodulunwa, Dr. N. B. Longbap and Dr. A. Yakubu, for the pains

they took to vet my work. I must not forget to thank Mr. Lipdo Zwalnap, Federal College of Education Pankshin, Mrs Clementina Barde, Principal, Government Secondary School, Mangu and Mr. Clement Gogwim, Ministry of Education Jos, for their financial and moral support.

My sincere thanks also go to the following: Mr. Lohbut Zwalchir, Mr. Ladep Timku, Mr. Sale Rimfat, Mr. Ishaku Duyah and Dr. Ali Obe, for their words of encouragement. I also thank Justice Albert Dandam, High Court Judge, Shendam, for his assistance and encouragement in the course of this programme.

I would also like to register my special thanks to all the hardworking and committed staff of LECAPS for their patience and cooperation in typing the manuscripts.

Finally, I wish to express my profound gratitude to my dear wife and children for their ceaseless prayers and encouragement without which my vision could have been a wishful thinking.

May the Almighty God continue to bless all those who assisted me in one way or another in realizing my dream.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late parents, Mr. Zhihur Bale and Mrs. Wayep Zhikur, of blessed memories. May their gentle souls rest in perfect peace with the Lord, Amen.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

CHAPTER THREE
METHOD AND PROCEDURE

LIST OF TABLES

Table **PAGE**

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

ABSTRACT

The present study was designed to compare the effects of the Direct Method and the Discovery Method on students' main idea comprehension ability. The specific objectives were to determine whether students taught using the Direct Method of finding main ideas would perform better than those who were taught using the Discovery Method. For the purpose of data collection, a sample of one hundred and twenty SS2 students, randomly selected from two Senior Secondary Schools in Langtang North Local Government Area of Plateau State, participated in the study. Using the Solomon–Four-Group Experimental Design, the sample was randomly divided into two major Experimental Groups, A and B, with sixty students in each Group. Each major Group was further randomly divided into four sub-groups, with fifteen students in each group. Group A was taught using the Direct Method, while Group B was taught using the Discovery Method. The data were analysed using the t-test statistic and the analysis of variance (ANOVA). The Post-test Mean Scores of Group A were computed and compared with the Post-test Mean Scores of Group B. To determine which method was more effective, a post hoc test was carried out to compare the mean scores of the four groups. The results indicated that though both methods were found to be effective in teaching the students the skills of finding the main ideas of text materials, students in Group A who were taught using the Direct Method performed significantly better than those in Group B who were taught using the Discovery Method. It was also found that students taught using the Direct Method performed better than those who were not exposed to any method of finding main ideas. Similarly, the group taught using the Discovery Method also did better than those who were not taught any method of finding main ideas. In other words, the four experimental groups performed better than their counterparts in the control groups. The results also revealed that generally secondary school students had difficulty in locating main ideas in both narrative and expository texts, but they found expository texts more difficult. The findings of this study were interpreted in terms of the need for direct and deliberate instruction in text structure and main idea identification.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The comprehension of reading materials depends, to a large extent, on the ability of the readers to identify the author's main ideas or most important information. Research has shown that readers will have difficulty understanding a text if they cannot locate its main ideas. The ability to figure out the main ideas of a passage or paragraph is an indication that the reader has understood that passage (Oyetunde, 1986). As one of the basic and most important comprehension skills required of a reader, main idea skills help readers comprehend, recall and retain better what they read. The point is, if a reader can discover the main ideas of each paragraph quickly and skillfully, he will be able to read textbooks and other materials faster and with better understanding.

Reading with adequate comprehension is the key to success in almost every subject in the curriculum. It is therefore, the consensus of reading experts and researchers that main idea skills must be taught to students in a direct,

active, systematic and effective manner, to enable them comprehend, recall and retain better what they read (Baumann, 1986; Aulls, 1986). According to Baumann, efficient reading involves the direct and systematic teaching of main idea skills to students. Hare & Bingham (1986) also recognize the need for students to be formally taught main idea skills. Students are often directed to practice finding main ideas in their text material, instead of being taught how and where to find the main ideas in reading materials. That is, it is important to help students in the problem of finding the main ideas by teaching them clear and specific strategies (Hare, Robinowitz & Schieble, 1989).

Many teaching methods to help students locate the authors main ideas in text materials have been suggested. These include Direct and Discovery Methods. Baumann and Aulls (1986) suggest a direct, real, active and systematic teaching of main idea skills to students to help them comprehend better what they read. The Direct instruction method as the effective classroom instruction is based on the assumption that students who are directly, painstakingly and

systematically taught by teachers perform better than those who are expected to learn on their own or from one another. This method involves teaching the students rules and information about how to identify, infer or construct main ideas in text materials in a direct and systematic manner. It involves teaching the students how to use topic sentences to pick out main ideas. The teacher's task in this method includes showing, explaining, directing, telling, modeling and demonstrating, main ideas in reading passages (Aulls, 1986). A study conducted by Baumann (1984b) as cited by Baumann (1986) shows that the direct instruction group performs better than the control group.

The discovery method of developing main ideas skills in students is based on the assumption that knowledge of text structures enhances students' main idea comprehension ability (Hare and Bingham, 1986). Reading researchers have confirmed that there is a high correlation between text structures and main ideas in text materials. Students who are aware of text structures and follow them in their reading assignments, comprehend, recall and retain main ideas better

than those who are not (Finley and Seaton, 1987; Vacca and Vacca, 1989; Wood; Flood and Lapp, 1992). Authors often use text structures such as enumeration, time order, comparison /contrast and cause/effect to convey important information to readers. Knowledge of how authors organize their ideas in textbooks helps readers distinguish important from less important information. This is so because ideas in texts are so arranged or organized that some are more important than others. But all the ideas or sentences in a paragraph or passage are logically connected to one another. Authors often begin their paragraphs with topic sentences which state main ideas. Then they use different text structures to develop or support the main ideas (James, 1984). To locate the main ideas of a passage, students must be taught how to follow or identify the signal words which authors use as clues to signal or show the direction of main ideas or major thoughts.

The assumption of the present study is that for students to comprehend, recall and retain better what they read, they must be taught main idea skills using the direct and discovery methods. It is against this background, therefore, that this study

is undertaken to determine the relative effectiveness of direct instruction and discovery methods of teaching main idea skills.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Most Nigerian secondary school students lack the skills to differentiate important from less important information in text materials to enable them to comprehend what they read. The students lack the skills to separate the author's main ideas from the supporting details (Baumann, 1986; Vacca & Vacca, 1989).

Experience has shown that most Nigerian secondary school students treat all words and sentences equally in a paragraph. That is, as far as these students are concerned, no word looks more important than the other. And no one sentence appears more significant than the other. All words and sentences look the same to most secondary school students (Donlan, 1980). The students' inability to distinguish important from less important information in text materials therefore leads to poor comprehension of text materials. The

inability of most students to identify the topic sentences that contain the author's main ideas is a serious reading problem that impedes academic success. Until the students are able to locate the author's main ideas in their text materials, they will not comprehend what they read, and hence will not learn and benefit from their textbooks. The question is: are the methods used in teaching reading comprehension skills appropriate and effective?

It is against this background that the present study was undertaken to determine a more effective method of teaching the main idea skills to secondary school students.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to compare the effects of the Direct and Discovery methods on main idea comprehension ability of selected senior secondary school students in Plateau State of Nigeria. Specifically, the study was designed to:

1. determine the effects of Direct and Discovery methods of teaching reading on students' main idea comprehension ability.

2. determine which of the two methods will be more effective in developing main idea comprehension skills in students.
3. find out whether students who are taught using Direct method will perform better than those who are not exposed to any method of teaching main ideas.
4. find out whether students who are taught using Discovery method will perform better than those who are not exposed to any method of teaching main ideas.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent will the Direct instruction facilitate the students' main idea comprehension ability?
2. To what extent will the Discovery method enhance the students' ability to identify the main ideas in text materials?
3. Which of the two methods will be more facilitative of main idea comprehension?

1.5 HYPOTHESES

In this study, the following hypotheses were tested:

1. There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of Experimental 1 in Group A.
2. There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of Control 1 in Group A.
3. There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of Experimental 1 in Group B.
4. There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of Control 1 in Group B.
5. There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of Experimental. 1 and Experimental 2 in Group A.
6. There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of Control 1 and Control 2 in Group A.
7. There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of Experimental 1 and Control 1 in Group A.
8. There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of Experimental 2 and Control 2 in Group A.

9. There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of Experimental 1 and Experimental 2 in Group B.
10. There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of Control 1 and Control 2 in Group B.
11. There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of Experimental 1 and Control 1 in Group B.
12. There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of Experimental 2 and Control 2 in Group B.
13. There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of Group A, taught with the five-step direct method and Group B, taught using the Text-Structure model (Discovery Method)..

1.6 THEORETICAL /CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework guiding this study is hinged on two lines of researches. First, students who are directly taught by their teachers perform better than those who are expected to learn on their own. (see Baumann, 1986). Second, students who are aware of text structures comprehend main ideas better than

those are not (see Clewell and Clffton, 1983; Alvermann, 1984; Finley and Seaton, 1987; Vacca and Vacca, 1989).

With regard to direct instruction, the following steps are recommended: introduction, example, direct instruction, teacher-guided application, independent practice.

The discovery method on the other hand, involves allowing the students to discover the main ideas in texts on their own. Under this method, students are taught text structures cues which authors use to convey main ideas to readers. Students are taught to follow signals, or “sign posts” to locate the author’s main ideas. Reading signals show direction of main ideas. The students are taught the relationship between main ideas and text structures. They are expected to follow reading signals or sign posts to locate the author’s main ideas. The students are taught how authors use reading signals or signal words to develop or show direction of main ideas.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The main idea comprehension skills are the basic reading skills needed to help readers comprehend, recall and retain better

what they read. It is against this background that the present study is undertaken to disseminate information to all stakeholders in education about the appropriate strategies of teaching and finding main ideas. All stakeholders in education will benefit from the findings of this study. Government and education policy formulators will realize the need and importance of reading as a tool of learning. The study findings will serve as a impetus for Government not only to encourage the teaching of reading as a distinct subject in schools, but also to ensure regular training and re-training of teachers in the methods of teaching reading.

Teachers at the secondary school level will also benefit from the findings of the present study. The study is designed to equip teachers, of secondary school with the techniques of developing main idea skills in their students through the direct and discovery methods. The study findings will also sensitize teachers to the formal, real, active, effective and systematic teaching of main idea skills. Teachers will discover from the present study that main idea skills should not be left to chance, but should be formally and painstakingly taught. Similarly, the study will equip teachers with the strategies for teaching text

structures as a means of enhancing students' main idea construction ability.

Students and parents also stand to benefit from the present study. The study will remedy the problem of poor comprehension of text materials among students. This is because the study is undertaken to equip the students with the strategies for finding the author's main ideas as the first step in comprehending their content textbooks. The study is also designed to familiarize students with text structures and their signal words which authors often use as clues to convey important ideas to readers in text materials. The study will expose students to the various methods of paragraph development. Students will discover that a paragraph deals with one central idea and that the central idea can be developed by the use of details such as cause/effect, comparison/contrast, enumeration and sequence structures. In the same vein, findings from this study will encourage parents to instill reading habit in their children to help them become efficient readers.

Similarly, some educated parents would realize that reading is a meaning-getting process and that reading without

comprehension is no reading at all. The findings from the present study will also benefit other researchers who may like to replicate the same study using the same design and instruments. In summary, the findings of this study will enable the teachers of English, and curriculum planners to adopt the Direct and Discovery methods of teaching the main idea skills.

1.8 DELIMITATION OF STUDY

The study was delimited to the comparison of the relative effectiveness of direct and discovery methods of teaching main idea skills. It was restricted to the teaching of paragraph, explicit and implicit main ideas, details, topic sentences, text structures and their signal words. However, the study was not designed to compare the performance of two or more schools in main idea identification. The study was limited to Plateau State of Nigeria. Specifically, it was conducted in two Senior Secondary Schools in Langtang North Local Government Area of Plateau State.

1.9 DEFINITION OF TERMS

In this chapter, attempts were made to define the following terms: main idea, text structure, top-level ideas, middle-level ideas, bottom level ideas, direct instruction method, discovery method and main idea comprehension ability.

Main Idea

As used in this study, the main idea is the most important information or ideas the author wishes to convey to readers. It is the author's major points.

Text Structure

Text structure refers to the hierarchical relationships among ideas in textbooks. It refers to how authors organize their ideas in textbooks. Authors organize their ideas in hierarchies of top-level ideas, middle–level ideas and bottom-level ideas. This hierarchical organization of ideas in textbooks is referred to as text structure. These ideas are logically connected to one another. That is, the top-level ideas are logically connected to the middle-level and the bottom-level ideas. Text structure also refers to how some ideas in textbooks are subordinate to others.

That is, it refers to how some ideas in textbooks are more important than others.

Top-level Ideas

These are the most important ideas in textbooks. They are the main ideas or major thoughts of the author. The top-level ideas dominate or subsume the middle and bottom-level ideas. Top-level ideas usually tell what the entire passage or paragraph is about. These are usually general statements that summarise a passage or paragraph.

Middle-level Ideas

These are subordinate information or ideas. They are referred to as supporting details. Middle-level ideas supports the top-level ideas (main ideas). They illustrate or exemplify the top-level ideas. Middle level ideas are related to the top-level ideas. Middle level ideas are usually specific statements. They are major details.

Bottom-level Ideas

These are also subordinate information or ideas in textbooks. They are details that give more information about the most important ideas (top-level ideas). The bottom-level ideas are also related to the top-level ideas. Bottom-level ideas are facts, examples and illustrations which authors use to underscore and highlight the main ideas. They are minor details.

Direct instruction method.

As used in this study, direct method of teaching main idea skills refers to the real, active, effective and systematic classroom teaching. Under this method, the teacher, in a face-to-face, reasonably formal manner, tells, shows, models, demonstrates, guides and teaches the target skills. It is the strategy for teaching main idea skills through rule formulations. The direct instruction method is based on the theory that students who are directly taught by teachers perform better than those who are expected to learn on their own or from each other. Under this method, the teacher explains the concept of main ideas and teaches the students the rules of how to find main ideas in text materials.

Discovery method

The discovery method involves teaching the students the skills of finding main ideas through the use of text structures. Under this method, students follow text organizational patterns to discover the author's main ideas on their own. They use text structures as clues to find main ideas. The students are taught that authors often begin the paragraph with topic sentences which contain main ideas. Then they (authors) use different text structures as supporting details to develop or illustrate the topic sentence. That is, authors use text structure clues or signal words to develop main ideas.

Main Idea Comprehension Ability

It is the ability of the students to differentiate the author's most important ideas from the less important ones. It is the ability of the students to recognize how authors organize their ideas in hierarchies of top-level, middle-level and bottom-level ideas. The author's top-level ideas are the main ideas which can appear anywhere in the paragraph. The middle-level ideas are the major supporting details which are used to develop the main ideas. The

bottom - level ideas are the minor details which authors use to expand upon the main ideas. The top-level, the middle - level and the bottom-level ideas are inter-related. The students are expected to differentiate top-level ideas from the middle and bottom-level ideas to enable them to comprehend what they read.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The review of relevant literature covers the reading process, the importance of reading, the nature of main Idea, factors affecting main idea Construction, method of teaching main idea, sequence of teaching main idea, text structures and main idea, sensitizing students to text patterns, review of empirical studies and summary of literature review.

2.1 THE CONCEPT OF READING

Reading is one of the most important language or communication skills. There are as many definitions of reading as there are reading specialists. Reading therefore, lacks a consensus or unitary definition. Reading experts are yet to arrive at a single definition of the term ‘reading’ or reading comprehension.

Ogunsiji (2005) views reading as an interactive process. He states that reading is a complex task involving the recognition of letters and words linked together to form sentences and larger discourse. Reading is an interactive process, between the reader and the writer. In the reading

process the reader combines text clues with his past experiences or prior knowledge to comprehend the writer's intended meaning. Reading is a process of thinking and should be taught as such (Obanya, 2003). As a highly mental activity, reading occurs at different skills and comprehension levels. Reading efficiency at the higher levels is usually built upon reading competence at the lower levels. Imam (2004) also defines reading as the receiving end of communication which confers many possible advantages to the actor. According to Imam, reading is an acquired skill under certain socio-cultural environments. It is a process of getting meaning from the printed or written text (Uya, 2004). Meaning, therefore, is central to reading.

Reading is an interactive process between the readers and the text or writer (Gomwalk, 2003). In the reading process, the reader brings his prior knowledge to bear on the text to comprehend what he reads. That is, to comprehend a text, the reader combines his past experience with the text clues to interpret the writer's intended meaning. Reading is an interactive process because it involves the interpretation of the writer's intended meaning or message. It is therefore, a process of communication between the reader and the writer or text. Okonkwo (2004) views reading as the ability to use

thinking skills. He sees reading as a process of comprehending, analyzing, describing, comparing and contrasting, interpreting or inferring, judging, evaluating, summarizing and drawing conclusions.

Nwogu and Nwoke (2002) view reading as a mechanical process which involves print or word recognition. They state that the reading process starts with the elementary skill of recognizing the alphabets. This skill is gradually developed to include the ability to recognize whole words sentences and phrases. For a reader to show perfect understanding of what he reads, he must be involved in the intellectual activity of evaluating and synthesizing.

Reading is not word calling or pronunciation of words (Andzayi and Umolu, 2002). They see reading as a process of getting meaning from the printed or written text. Reading, according to them, is a process of thinking, reasoning, imagining, judging, anticipating and predicting.

Ikonta (2002) also defines reading as a complex activity which involves higher mental processes such as recall, problem-solving, evaluation, imagination, thinking, organizing, applying and anticipating. She views reading as a tool for learning other subjects because the academic progress of an individual depends largely on his reading ability. She further

states that reading is a process of getting meaning from the text.

Reading is also defined by Luikpe (2002) as a complex information - processing system. He also views reading as a process of extracting meaning from the text. Comprehension therefore, is central to reading. It is the goal of reading. Reading without understanding is no reading. It is an exercise in futility. Luikpe further divides reading comprehension into three levels or stages. First, the readers comprehend a text material at the literal or factual level. At this stage, the reader comprehends only the openly stated words and sentences on the surface. The second level or stage of comprehension is the inferential or interpretive level. At this stage, the reader is required to think along the text before arriving at the author's intended meaning or message. Here, the reader comprehends ideas and relationships that are implicitly stated (implied) rather than explicitly stated as in literal comprehension. Thirdly, the readers comprehend a text material at the creative level. At this stage, the readers are expected to use the author's ideas as a basis for projecting new ideas. Heilman, Blair and Rupley (1985) recognize three schools of thought on what reading is. These are Top-down, Bottom-up and Interactive

theories or models of reading. These models represent the three different views people hold about the reading process.

The three views have two basic things in common. They all focus on a reader and a text. The first school of thought views reading as a top-down process. The second school of thought considers the reading process as a bottom-up process, while the third view looks at reading as a process of interaction between the reader and the text material. The top-down theorists focus their attention on the reader. This school of thought believes that the reader is more important than the text in the reading process. According to this theory, “readers do not begin reading with their minds totally blank, but bring information based on past experiences with language and their background knowledge to the reading process” (Heilman, Blair & Rupley 1985). These theorists further argue that good and skilled readers contribute more information to the comprehension of the printed text than the text itself contributes. This model views reading as an active mental process during which the reader is engaged in thinking, reasoning, evaluation, predicting, questioning, defining and redefining (James, 1984). The top-down theory also believe that during the process of reading, good readers do not consider the words or phrases, but apply their

background knowledge or past experiences to determine meanings as they read.

For instance, if a reader is reading a familiar topic or text, a topic about which he is very knowledgeable, he does not pay close attention to the words and phrases in the text. Since he is familiar with the words and phrases in the text contained in the passage the reader relies more on the information in his head (past experiences) to process the text. According to this model reading is a cognitive complex mainly on visual uses. The Bottom-up theory contrasts with the top-down theory. The text is the main focus of this model. The bottom-up theorists argue that the most important factor in the reading process is the written text, rather than what the reader brings to the text. The text is, therefore, more important than the reader in the reading process. According to this school of thought, “the text is processed by the reader without much prior knowledge about the content or topic of what he is reading” (Heilman, Blair, & Rupley 1985). Put in another way, the reader, according to this view, is passive as he does not bring to the reading process his background knowledge or past experiences to determine meaning from the text. The proponents of this view hold that the reader pays very close attention to words and phrases contained in text during the

process of reading. He relies mainly or entirely on the textual information or even to process the text. This school of thought views reading as the ability to decode and identify words, using visual symbols or cues only.

The third school of thought about the reading process is the “interactive process”. This concept, according to Heilman, Blair & Rupley, is a blend of the top-down and bottom up views of reading. The interactive theory, which is the current view of reading, emphasizes both the reader and the text. This school of thought believes that in the reading process, the readers use both text clues and background knowledge in order to comprehend the printed text. Simply put, the readers apply both their prior knowledge or past experience and the text feature or cues in order to understand what they are reading. Under the interactive process, the reader does not depend entirely on one element or the other. The reader does not depend solely on his background knowledge to comprehend a text nor does he depend on the textual clues alone to interpret the text. The two factors, the reader and the text information, are always interacting in the process of reading. Oyetunde and Umolu (1991) also support the view that reading is an

interactive process when they say: the current view of reading is that it is an interactive process in which both the reader and the text contribute information to arrive at the intended meaning of the author.

This is in contrast to the popular mis-conception that reading is basically a visual-perceptual process in which the reader passively discover the textual information letter by letter and word by word. It is now known that the reader's comprehension of a text depends largely on the extent to which he actively brings to the reading process at lest two things: (a) his knowledge of the Language in which he is reading and (b) his background knowledge relevant to the content of the text. In spite of the different schools of thought about what reading actually is, reading specialists have not agreed on a single theory which completely defines the reading process. Different reading specialists define the reading process differently. Many reading experts view reading and comprehension as synonymous. Hence, the term "reading comprehension" will be used in this chapter. After all, we cannot claim to be reading unless we are comprehending.

While Clay (1985) sees reading as “a complex process that involves thinking a long the printed text”, Chewell & Cliffton (1983) regard reading comprehension as the ability to understand the printed language by answering comprehension question correctly.

Roe, Stoodt & Burns (1978) also emphasize the importance of comprehension in the reading process. They agree that comprehension is the goal of the reading exercise. Though there is controversy in the area of reading regarding multiple aspects of the reading process, there is a general consensus about the importance of comprehension. Comprehension, therefore, is the heart of reading. They further argue that the reader cannot learn unless he can understand what the writer has written. Similarly, the reader cannot recall what he has read unless he has comprehended it. And for effective comprehension of the reading, the reader must have intelligence, language and background knowledge or past experience. Only a small percentage of the information required to understand a text comes from the printed page, while the greater portion of the information comes from the

reader's brain (Roe, Stoodt & Burns 1978). Reading, therefore, involves both the eyes and the brain. Also stressing the importance of comprehension, Cushenbery (1969) maintains that "unless the readers understand the printed text, their reading becomes a mechanical process with little or no use to them". Reading to him, is the ability to identify individual words, the ability to group the words into thought and the ability to relate the thought units into meaningful sentence, paragraph, chapter or book.

Ekwall and Shanker (1985) support the view that reading is an interactive process. They argue that "the ability to understand what is read is affected by both the reader and the text". Reading comprehension, therefore, is the meaning obtained from what is written on the page. To comprehend is to understand what is written. James (1984) views reading comprehension as the process of communication through which most formal learning takes place. He explains that "during the reading process, the reader is engaged in thinking, predicting, questioning evaluating, defining and redefining". Thus, he views reading as an active mental process. Similarly,

Oyetunde and Aboki (1998) agree that during the process of reading, the reader is actively trying to comprehend the printed text by blending his past relevant experience with the text information. To Fry (1963) reading comprehension is difficult to define. He sees reading comprehension, however, as the process of getting the thoughts that were in the mind of the author into the reader's mind. Quandt (1977), Gideon (1985) and Singer (1985) also emphasize the importance of "reading" or comprehension in the reading process. They view reading as a meaning - getting process. "Without comprehension, words are only dead symbols, which neither communicate nor produce meaning". An individual is only "calling the word", "pronouncing the word" or "barking at the word" if he reads without comprehending what is being read. Reading, therefore, goes beyond mere word identification or pronunciation. This position is supported by Turner (1979). He observes that "some children can pronounce words perfectly and correctly, but will not understand what they read. There are also those children who can comprehend very well, but they have difficulty pronouncing the word". Reading therefore is an active search

for meaning. Anderson and Lapp (1988) view reading as a decoding and encoding process that is, it is an interactive process between the reader and the text. Reading comprehension is understanding what is being used. And in order to comprehend a text, the reader must know how the various sentences in a paragraph are related to one another. The reader must also be able to recognize the main ideas in each paragraph.

In the reading process, the main task of a reader is to understand the printed message, interpret and apply the information (Blake, 1974).

Despite the multiple definitions of the reading process, there is a consensus among the reading experts that the goal of reading is to understand what is being read. That is, comprehension is the heart of any reading exercise. Another area of consensus among the reading specialists is the current theory that reading comprehension is an interactive process. That is, the reader applies both his past experience and the text cues in order to comprehend what he reads. According to Goodman, Smith, Meredith and Goodman 1987), the process

of reading commences with the text, which has to be processed as language. The construction of meaning is the aim of the reading process. Without meaning, there is no reading, and readers cannot construct meaning without employing the process. To comprehend the process of reading, we must understand how the reader, the writer and the text contribute to it (Goodman, Smith, Meredith, & Goodman 1987). They view reading as an interactive process between the reader and the text.

Both the reader characteristics and the text characteristics are equally important in the process of reading. The comprehension of a text is based on a combination of factors, some of which include the relative proficiency of the reader, his purpose of reading, his social culture, his background knowledge, his control of the language and his attitudes or moods. Goodman, Smith, Meredith, & Goodman (1987), explain that different people or readers comprehend the same text differently because their purposes for reading, perception of main idea, level of understanding, prior knowledge, culture and interests differ.

Goodman, Smith, Meredith, & Goodman (1987) identify three strategies for reading comprehension. These are sampling, prediction and inference strategies. In the process of reading, readers use these strategies to construct meaning from a text. They refer to these strategies as reading strategies. These are developed only through reading. In the course of reading a text, readers employ sampling strategies to select from the many clues provided by the text or writer. Text authors often provide a variety of clues to assist readers understand what they read. Some clues are more useful than others. The reader therefore, choose the most useful and productive clues to help him construct meaning from the text.

Another reading strategy is the prediction strategy. Readers employ this strategy to anticipate the reading material. Using this strategy, the reader can predict the ending of a story, the logic of an explanation, the structure of a complex sentence and the ending of a word (Goodman, Smith, Meredith, & Goodman 1987). Readers often use their background knowledge to predict what is coming in the text and what the meaning will be. During a silent reading exercise,

readers predict and sample as they read. Inference strategy is based on the readers' prior knowledge. That is, readers use their past experience to infer. Readers use this strategy to infer what is not explicitly stated in the text. However, readers also infer things that will become explicit later. Things that are usually inferred during the reading process include the antecedent of a pronoun, the relationships between characters, the author's biases, to mention a few. Inference strategy may also be used to decide what the text should have said where there are omissions or misprint in it.

Similarly, inference strategy is used to determine implicit main ideas in a text. The search for meaning is the most important feature of the reading process (Goodman, Smith, Meredith & Goodman, 1987). They contend that reading is not only an intelligent behaviour, but also an active dynamic mental process. Readers therefore, depend heavily on their background knowledge to comprehend what they read. Reading is no longer considered as a bottom up, passive activity. Instead, it is postulated that readers construct message through different active processes such as schema

construction and elaboration, prediction and manipulation of information (Duin & Graves, 1987). Schema theorists such as

Anderson (1977); Bradford (1983); Voss (1983); Anderson and Pearson (1984), as cited by Duin and Graves, have confirmed that readers use their prior knowledge to comprehend what they read. The current view about the reading process is that it is an active mental process. In the course of reading, the reader engages in thinking, reasoning, judgement and evaluation of the reading material. Heilman, Blair and Rupley (1985) contend that the reading process is a dynamic one that requires active, meaningful communication between the writer and the reader. Meaning is the goal of reading. Reading without meaning or understanding is therefore an empty exercise. Reading specialists see the reading process as a complicated process. Heilman, Blair and Rupley (1985)) view reading comprehension as an internal mental process which cannot be observed or studied directly. Reading is related to thinking.

Similarly, Baumann (1988) sees reading comprehension as a complex mental process which cannot be directly

observed. The process of comprehension occurs in the brain. How a reader comprehends a text cannot be seen. Only some open behaviour can be measured, observed or analysed. From these overt behaviours, inference can be drawn about the quantity and quality of comprehension.

According to Baumann, people had a narrow concept of reading in the past. Reading was regarded as a reproductive process, with emphasis on the reader's ability to recall, remember, re-state or reproduce the author's message. This is a traditional concept of reading that sees reading as a passive process which does not involve thinking by the reader. Emphasis was then placed on the text information. Interpretation of the author's message was de-emphasized. But the current view of reading is that it is constructive. It is an interactive process between the reader and the text. Hence, the traditional view of reading solely as a reproductive task has been de-emphasized.

It is now recognized that in order to comprehend a text the reader must combine his prior knowledge with the text

information. That is, the reader must bring together all the text clues provided by the author and his past experiences or knowledge of the text or topic, purpose for reading, his motivation and interest, in order to comprehend what he reads.

2.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF READING

The importance of reading in today's society cannot be overemphasized. Reading plays an important role in the life of an individual and the society. It enables an individual meet daily needs. It helps in solving our psychological and emotional problems. It is true that there is hardly any worry or grief that an hour's reading cannot remove. Reading, therefore, frees the mind in the same way as exercise frees the body. In fact, reading plays a crucial role in our daily lives. Roe, Stoodt, and Burns (1978) observe that reading is indispensable in our everyday living. In order to function adequately in the society, one has to read. He observes that on daily basis, people read road signs, precautions, instruction on medicine bottles, and advertisements in newspapers, magazines and the like (Roe, Stoodt & Burns, 1978).

Similarly, the shopkeeper needs reading to progress in his business. He has to read labels that describe the content of items. The farmer must read the directions for the application of insecticides or fertilizers. While the applicant reads adverts, the voter needs to read the names of candidates and political parties. People learn how to keep accounts, repair machines and construct roads, bridges, and houses through reading. (Oyetunde, 1987; Roe, Stoodt & Burns, 1978). Professionals such as teachers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, accountants and so on, depend largely on reading as a means of enhancing their productivity and efficiency. Through reading, one acquires knowledge, skills, values, ideas, vision, and wisdom among other benefits of reading. The importance of reading in today's increasingly literate society can never be overemphasised. The ability to read is now regarded as complete education. Through reading people broaden their horizon (Oyetunde, 1987). Knowledge is dynamic. It is ever changing. One, therefore, needs to read to keep pace with new changes and developments or else one becomes expired. People need reading to keep up to date in their various fields of

calling. Aboderin (1983) observes that one's progress in school and later life depends mainly on reading to obtain information. He further maintains that reading is indispensable in our daily functioning. He argues that it is difficult for one to become an effective member of his society without the ability to read. It is an established fact that the socio-political, economic and technological development of any nation is tied to the level of literacy of its citizens. Advanced nations such as USA, Britain, Germany and France, to cite a few examples, owe their technological breakthrough to reading. Modern technologies are developed through reading (Fagbemi, 1997).

Fagbemi (1997) points out that where majority of a nation's citizens are illiterate, there cannot be much development both at the personal and national levels. Reading enhances intellectual development which in turn facilitates personal and national development. Through reading, people acquire skills needed for the technological advancement of a nation.

Literacy is a potent weapon for fighting all forms of injustices. Political, social, religious and economic oppressions and marginalisation, are addressed through reading (Mangvwat, 1992), as cited by Fagbemi (1997). Reading enhances people's consciousness about the oppressive systems within which they live. Reading as a weapon, enables people to mobilize themselves in order to fight for their rights. While illiteracy hampers socio-economic, political and technological development of the nation, reading enhances thinking and creative imagination needed for technological and scientific development of a nation. Great and accomplished leaders like America's J. F. Kennedy, Ghana's Kwame Nkurmah, Nigeria's Nnamdi Azikiwe, Nigeria's Obafemi Awolowo, Tafawa Balewa and South Africa's Nelson Mandela, to cite a few examples, achieved greatness through self-development, that is, through reading (Ekpenyong, 1999). Literacy also enables people to be aware of the laws of their land. In the same manner, reading enables them to know their rights and limitations. It makes it possible for people to initiate and implement government policies and programmes

(Ekpenyong, 1999). Reading liberates people from the shackles of ignorance, diseases, poverty and superstitious beliefs which are inimical to personal and national development. The illiterate are known to resist changes and new ideas, thereby retarding the socio-economic, political, cultural and technological advancement of a nation (Ekpenyong, 1999).

Olugbodi (1999) supports the fact that inability to read inhibits the acceptance of new ideas, changes and techniques necessary for the rapid transformation of the society. Also emphasising the social values of reading, Strang (1978) states that democracy cannot succeed when people are ignorant and cannot think for themselves. Reading has become an indispensable source of information in today's society (Oyetunde & Joanne, 1989).

2.3 THE NATURE OF MAIN IDEA

The term "main idea" has no clear-cut definition. Different reading experts define the concept of main idea differently. Moore and Cunningham (1986) indicate that a great deal of

confusion or ambiguity surrounds the concept of main idea. They attempt to clarify the confusion surrounding the many conceptions and definitions of main idea by providing operational definition for nine different terms used to denote important information in written prose. They see the term ‘main idea’ as encompassing Gist, important information, interpretation, key word, topic, topic sentence, topic issue, selective summary and theme. All the nine terms express main idea or important information. Moore and Cunningham further explain that different types of main idea are legitimate. According to them, main idea is the general, umbrella term that covers all the nine specific types mentioned above. Winograd and Bridge (1986), in their study of main idea, point out the lack of precision in defining the tem ‘main idea’. They observe that concepts such as Gist, summary, main points, super-ordinate proposition, plot, theme, topic sentence, text structure, macro-structure and schematic super-structure which are used to denote main idea, lack clarity. According to them, the term’ main idea’ not only varies from one reader to another, but also from one text type to another. Different readers perceive main

idea differently. In the same vein, the concept of main idea varies from text type to text type. Moore and Cunningham (1986) explain that though some of the terms have common elements in their definitions, the same term may mean different things for different types of written prose. In a narrative text, the min idea tells what happened in the story and why it happened. In expository texts, on the other hand, the main idea may be the argument advanced by the author and the information that supports it.

The concept of main idea is, therefore, a relative one. What the author regards as important information may not be considered as important information (main idea) by the reader. Winogard and Bridge (1986) observe that the relative importance of information within the same text varies from reader to reader and from text situation to text situation, depending on the reader's purpose. The reader's purpose for reading a given text often determines the relative importance attached to what the author is saying. What a reader thinks the main idea is, may not be what the author intended the main idea of the text to be (Vacca and Vacca, 1989). The reader's

purpose and the perspective that he or she brings to the text often determines the relative importance of what the author says.

Well-organised texts usually communicate this importance to the reader. When teachers ask their students to locate the main idea or the central idea in a passage, it is the textual important information that they generally have in mind. Contextual important information on the other hand is what is considered important by the reader, based on his personal interest, background experience and purpose for reading. For instance, a reader skimming a chapter to find information related to a report, is searching for contextual important information. Researchers have found that the textual and the contextual information may coincide, but they may also differ (Baumann, 1986; Vacca and Vacca, 1989). The main idea of a paragraph signals to the reader the most important statement the author has presented to explain the topic (Aulls, 1986). All the other sentences in paragraph refer to the major idea which is usually conveyed in a single sentence. However, authors sometimes convey their main idea in two sentences or

statements. The main statement contains more information than a topic which is represented by a single word or a phrase. Aulls further explains that the main idea as a single statement, may appear anywhere in a paragraph. It may be implied rather than explicitly stated. According to Aulls, an implied main idea may be inferred or formulated from the supporting details in a paragraph. That is, the rest of the sentences in a paragraph. The main idea of a paragraph is developed by supporting details or ideas. In other words, the supporting details illustrate, elaborate or support the main idea in a paragraph. Roe, Stoodt and Burns (1978), observe that the main idea of a paragraph or passage is the most general idea the author wants to convey about his or her topic. In other words, the main idea logically subsumes all the other sentences in the paragraph or a passage. Duffelmeyer and Duffelmeyer (1987) make a distinction between the main idea and topic. According to them, the topic of an essay tells what the essay or passage is about at the simplest level. It is a word or a phrase that tells what the essay or passage is all about.

The difference between main idea and topic is illustrated by Duffelmeyer and Duffelmeyer thus:

TOPIC	**MAIN IDEA**
Dogs:	There are many kinds of dogs and each has a unique characteristics.
Handicapped Children:	In the last five years, schools have made efforts to cater for both the handicapped and normal Students.
My Grandmother:	My grandmother lived a life of emulation by all.

It can be seen from the above that while a topic is expressed in one word or a phrase, main idea is expressed in a complete sentence. It can also be seen that main idea not only expresses the topic or subject of a passage, but also tells something important about the topic. The main idea is a general statement which enhances the leader's comprehension of the message intended by the author.

Hare and Bingham (1986) define main idea as the most important idea or statement in a text. According to Meyer (1975), as cited by Hare and Bingham, all the top-level ideas in

hierarchy of text ideas should be considered as main ideas. James (1984) sees main idea as the key point or the point that dominates most well constructed paragraphs. According to James, it is a misconception to assume that all paragraphs contain main ideas. Put in another way, not all paragraphs contain main ideas. As the central idea or thought, the main idea may be spread over a series of paragraphs. In spite of the confusion that surrounds the concept of main idea, reading experts agree that main idea is:

i. the most general statement in a paragraph that summarizes or tells what the entire paragraph is about.

ii. a unifying sentence, a sentence that binds, ties or connects other sentences in a paragraph together.

iii. the most general point the author wants to make about the topic.

iv. a sentence that subsumes all other sentences or statements in a paragraph. (Baumann, 1986; Vacca and Vacca,1989)

2.3.1 Positions of Main Idea in Paragraphs

Main idea positions in paragraphs are not fixed. The main idea may appear anywhere in a paragraph. It may appear at the beginning, in the middle, at the end of a paragraph or any place else (Smith, 1963). Smith further explains that it is misleading for teachers to teach their students that main ideas are always stated in the first sentence of a paragraph. Joffe (1988) also agrees that the main idea sentence can be found anywhere in the paragraph, although it is most often found at the beginning or at the end. Reading experts and researchers have identified two types of main ideas. These are directly or explicitly stated main idea and implied main idea. Donlan (1980) maintains that a paragraph's main idea can appear at the beginning, in the middle, at the end, at both the beginning and end or not be stated at all.

Similarly, Blake (1974) observes that the author may sometimes state his main ideas directly in paragraph headings or in topic sentences. This implies that students will have to search for the main ideas in each paragraph of the passage. Implied main ideas on the other hand, are not openly or directly

stated in the text or paragraph, Instead, they are suggested by the sentences in the paragraph taken together. Researchers have shown that students have more difficulty with implied main ideas than with explicit main ideas. A study conducted by Hare, Rabinowitz and Schieble (1989) shows that finding the implied main idea is more tasking and challenging than locating explicit main idea. Researchers have also revealed that students with average or below average ability usually have difficulty constructing implied main ideas (Blake 1974). In the same vein, students with limited prior knowledge have difficulty with implied main ideas.

Hare, Rabinowitz, & Shieble, (1989) observe that one of the main differences between the narrative texts and the expository texts is the position of the main idea. According to them, main ideas in narrative texts are often explicitly stated and are clearly located at the beginning of a text or paragraph. That is, in first sentence position of the paragraph. To determine the main idea in narrative texts, all the students need to do is to identify the statements or sentences that contain the main idea in each paragraph. Studies have, however, shown that not all narrative texts contain explicit main ideas. Main ideas are not explicitly stated in some

narrative texts nor are they located in the first sentence of the paragraph. (Donlan, 1980; Alexander, 1976; Baumann, 1986 and Afflerbach, 1990). In other words, some narrative texts contain implied main ideas. Hare et al (1989) point out that in a narrative text where the main idea is implicitly stated or where the main idea is not located at the beginning, students should use the construction method to determine the main ideas. That is, students would have to formulate or generate the main ideas, using their own prior knowledge.

Expository materials, however, are more problematic. Baumann and Serra (1984) as cited by Hare et al (1989), discover in their studies that expository texts disregard the rule that the main idea should appear in the first sentence of a paragraph. Main ideas in expository texts, therefore, appear mostly in a medial or final sentence in the paragraph. They hardly appear in the initial position. Where the main ideas are implied, they constitute a problem to students (Afflerbach, 1990). Studies have confirmed that students encounter more difficulty locating main ideas in expository texts than in narrative texts (Arnold, 1981; Cunningham & Moore, 1986). Sparks (1970) cites examples of different positions of main ideas in paragraphs, thus:

Example 1: **Main Idea at the Beginning**

Nigerians enjoy many privileges: They enjoy freedom of expression. They have freedom of movement within the country. They have a fairly high standard of living.

Example 2: **Main Idea at the End**

Nigerians enjoy freedom of expression. Nigerians have freedom of movement within the country. They have fairly high standard of living. *No doubt, Nigerians enjoy many privileges*.

Example 3: **Main Idea at the Beginning and at the End**

Nigerians enjoy many privileges. Nigerians enjoy freedom of expression. They have freedom of movement within the country. They have a fairly high standard of living. *Nigerians are indeed blessed in many ways*. In example 3, the author placed his main idea in both the first and the last sentences to give the main idea an added emphasis.

Example 4: **Main Idea in the Middle**

In the last lesson, we discussed the duties and responsibilities of Nigerian citizens. *Now let us turn to the privileges enjoyed by Nigerians*. They enjoy freedom of expression. They have

freedom of movement within the country. Nigerians have a fairly high standard of living.

Example 5: **Main Idea Implied**

Nigerians enjoy freedom of expressions. They have freedom of movement within the country. They have a fairly high standard of living.

In example 5 above, the main idea is not stated, but implied. The paragraph does not contain a statement which is more general than the others. None of the three sentences contains a main idea that unifies the three. To determine the main idea of this paragraph, students must use their knowledge to express or formulate some general statement that will tie the three sentences together. Students, particularly the average or below average ones have difficulty with implied main ideas. The construction method is used for implied main ideas.

Note: The italicized sentences in each paragraph are the main ideas.

2.4 FACTORS AFFECTING MAIN IDEA CONSTRUCTION

The skill of locating implied main idea in texts is one of the most complex comprehension skills. The comprehension of any text depends to a large extent on the ability of the reader to recognise the main idea of that text. Simply put, a reader cannot comprehend a text without identifying its main ideas. When main ideas are not explicitly stated in a text, the readers have to construct some. This is not an easy task. Afflerbach (1990) observes that constructing a main idea from texts is an important and often difficult reading comprehension task. Afflerbach explains that when the main idea of a text is implied, the reader cannot simply choose the main idea statement from surrounding statements. He must therefore, construct a statement to represent the main idea. According to Afflerbach (1990), the construction of the main idea is considered crucial to the comprehension of texts. Yet, studies have indicated that many students at the secondary level lack main idea construction strategies (Baumann, 1986 & Vacca and Vacca, 1989).

A good number of researches have shown that students' ability to construct implied main idea depends on many factors (Moore & Readence, 1980; Duffelmeyer and Duffelmeyer (1987). One of the factors that influences a reader's main idea construction ability is his intelligence. Studies have shown that there is a high correlation between intelligence and reading. Roe, Stoodt and Burns (1978) observe that the level of a person's intelligence is related to his or her reading progress at all levels of the educational system. Students with low intelligence, therefore, may have difficulty with main idea construction, especially at the higher levels where reading materials are more complex. According to Cushenbery (1969), there is a positive relationship between general intelligence and ability to read for different purposes. Comprehension process involves reasoning which is a component of intelligence. A student's ability to recognise text structures which authors use to convey main ideas, depends to a large extent, on his intelligence (Spache & Spache, 1977).

Typically the skill of main idea construction is easier for gifted students than those with average or below average

ability (Cushenbery, 1969). Another important factor that influences the reader's main idea construction is his prior knowledge or past experiences. Reading is an interactive process. The reader's main idea construction ability may be influenced by his prior knowledge of the content domain of the text (Rumelhart, 1977) as cited by Afflerbach (1990). Prior knowledge has been shown to facilitate comprehension processes generally. Afflerbach (1990) indicates that readers with adequate prior knowledge of the content domain of the text, construct main idea statements automatically, while those who lack prior knowledge of the topic have difficulty constructing the main idea statements. According to him, readers with high background knowledge of the topic of the text have well-developed schemata or knowledge structures into which they assimilate the text information. Students' background experiences, therefore, facilitate and enhance their main idea construction ability. That is when students are familiar with the topic of the text, their main idea construction ability is enhanced.

The task of producing or formulating the main idea is difficult even for skilled or accomplished reader. The problem may have been compounded by the readers' lack of prior knowledge (Brown & Day, 1983; & Garner, 1982), as cited by Afflerbach. Their studies reveal that expert readers automatically construct the main idea when they read texts about familiar topics. It is therefore difficult for students to construct main idea statements for unfamiliar texts or topics. Expert readers who lack prior knowledge, therefore, depend on the use of comprehension strategies to construct main idea statements.

Prior knowledge is indispensable in the construction of main idea. Yusuf (1997) indicates that prior knowledge has been shown to influence the reader's ability to comprehend the meaning intended by the author. Yusuf further observes that students' apparent reading problems are traceable to inadequate or low prior knowledge. Most students at the secondary level cannot read with maximum comprehension because they have limited background experiences. Comprehension of the main idea of a text is the use of prior

knowledge. Without prior knowledge, a complex object such as a text is not only difficult to comprehend, but also meaningless (Yusuf, 1997).

The construction of main idea is, therefore, difficult if not impossible without the use of prior knowledge. The text no longer has the monopoly of meaning as was earlier thought. Meaning also comes from the reader based on his prior knowledge of the text or topic (Zakaluk, Samuels & Taylor, 1986). The reader's familiarity with the topic of the text not only facilitates his comprehension but also his recall of main ideas. Students may fail to understand a text because they lack the relevant background knowledge needed for the construction of meanings from the text (Mason & Au, 1968; Roe, Stoodt & Burns, 1978; Guthrie, 1981; Goodman, Smith Meredith & Goodman, 1987; Davis & Winek, 1989). Prior knowledge facilitates not only main idea construction ability but also the comprehension processes generally (Ekwall & Shanker, 1985). There is a general consensus today that teachers should activate students' prior knowledge before the reading exercise commences. This helps in enhancing students' main

idea construction skills. Nessel (1988) agrees that students need to do some thinking about the topic before they read so that they will link new information with what they already know. Through guided discussions and leading questions, at the pre-reading stage, the teacher helps and guides students to discover both the explicit and the implicit main ideas of the text. Purpose setting also influences students' ability to construct main idea. Purpose questions focus students' attention on the important ideas in the passage. They help students sort out important from less important information in the text (Roe, Stoodt, & Burns, 1978; Oyetunde, 1986; Blanton, Wood & Moorman, 1990; Orogun & Agukwe, 1997). Purpose questions are designed to teach particular comprehension skills. They are not meant to test students. Reading without a pre-determined purpose may not achieve the desired results (Oyetunde, 1986). Blanton, Wood, & Moorman, (1990), suggest that students should always have a purpose for reading. Purpose setting, therefore, is an important factor in enhancing students' main idea construction ability. Purpose regulates and guides students towards specific and particular

information in a text. In short, it directs and focuses students' attention towards important or main ideas in a text.

One other important factor that affects students' main idea construction is text structure. Text structure refers to the way in which a text is organised. It refers to how authors organise their ideas in texts, using signal words (text patterns) such as enumeration, time order, cause effect and comparison/contrast. Authors use these text pattens to convey important or main ideas in texts (Alvermann, 1984; Finley & Seaton 1987; Vacca & Vacca, 1989). Text organisation therefore, plays an important role in helping students construct main idea statements. Knowledge of text patterns facilitates students' main idea construction ability. Miligan (1986) observes that students may have difficulty generating main ideas because the reading materials are not suited to their reading abilities or levels. He therefore, suggests that teachers should choose materials that not only match the students reading levels, but also about which they have high or adequate prior knowledge. Difficult and unfamiliar reading

texts, therefore, hamper students' ability to construct main idea statement.

A number of studies have provided evidence that students' main idea construction ability is enhanced when texts are well structured, with explicit main ideas in the first sentence position, followed by supporting ideas (Finley & Seaton, 1987; Hare, Rabinowitz & Shieble, 1989). Flood and Lapp (1986) explain that text structure affects both the type and amount of information recalled. The better organised the text, the better remembered the information. Clewell and Cliffton (1983) also observe that students who employ text patterns in their reading exercise, recall more information.

2.5 METHODS OF TEACHING MAIN IDEA

Researchers such as Moore and Readance, (1980); Hare and Bingham, 1986; Baumann, (1986); Vacca and Vacca (1989), observe that a high percentage of secondary school students cannot identify the main ideas in reading materials either because they are not taught at all or are taught by poor, ineffective and harmful methods. Teachers of English at the

secondary level should not expect their students to acquire main idea skills on their own or by accident. The skill is not “caught” but taught. The main idea skill must, therefore, be deliberately, formally, painstakingly and directly taught to students. Moore and Readence (1980) indicate the need for teachers to formally teach students the strategies for finding main ideas. They explain that students often lack the ability to distinguish important from less important ideas in texts. Similarly, Hare and Bingham (1986), and Donlan (1980), stress the need for main idea instruction. According to them, it is wrong for teachers to direct students to find the main idea in texts without teaching them how to do so. For the effective teaching of main idea skills to students, Baumann (1986) and Aulls (1986) recommend the Direct Instruction Method and Discovery Method.

2.5.1 **Direct instruction method:**

The direct instruction method of teaching the main idea comprehension is the actual, real, conscious and effective teaching of the main idea comprehension ability (Baumann, 1986). The direct instruction method, according to Baumann,

is hinged on the idea that students learn what they are taught directly by teachers. And what they are not directly taught by teachers, students do not learn. This method is ideal for teaching students subjects areas such as sciences, mathematics, language and many other reading skills.

Baumann (1986) and Hare and Bingham (1986) show that students who are directly taught by teachers perform better than those who are expected to learn on their own, or from each other. Students learn to read most effectively when teachers adopt systematic teaching, monitor students' responses and give students feedback on their performances. The direct instruction method is an effective method of teaching disadvantaged and poor readers. It is based on small group, face to face teaching of the main idea skills by teachers. Baumann explains that in a direct instruction method the teacher, in a face to face, reasonably formal manner, tells, shows, models, demonstrates and teaches the target skill. The direct instruction method is more or less teacher-centred. The method lays emphasis on the teacher who leads and controls the learning situations. For effective teaching of the main idea

comprehension skills, Baumann (1986) divides the direct instruction method into five (5) steps:

Step 1: **Introduction:** The teacher starts the lesson with verbal explanation and definition of the concept of main idea.

Step 2: **Example**: Step two involves verbal modelling of main idea. Here, the teacher shows students examples of main idea sentences in texts or paragraphs. Also at this stage, the teacher tells the students how to apply the rules to locate main ideas in textbooks.

Step 3: **Direct Instruction/Teaching of the Target Skill**: The actual and real teaching of the main idea comprehension skills takes place at this stage. Here, the teacher controls the lesson. He teaches students directly how and where to locate the main ideas in texts. All the strategies of finding the main ideas in text materials are taught to students. At this stage, the teacher is actively engaged in showing, telling, modeling and demonstrating the

target skill. Here, the primary responsibility for learning the target skill rests with the teacher.

Step 4: **Teacher-Directed Application:** At this stage, the responsibility for learning the target skill begins to shift to students (Pearson, 1985; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983), as cited by Baumann (1986). In this step, the teacher guides and supervises students to examine short paragraphs that contain the main ideas. Here, students are compelled to apply the main idea comprehension skills which were taught to them previously. The teacher is able to monitor the success of students in acquiring the main idea skills. The teacher can plan for a re-teaching of the target skill if the need arises.

Step 5: **Independent Practice:** It is the final step in teaching the main idea comprehension ability. Here, full responsibility for learning the target skill is shifted to students. At this stage, the students are expected to learn the main idea skills on their

own, without the teacher's guidance or assistance. The students are provided with paragraphs containing the explicit and implicit main ideas. They are then asked to identify or construct the main ideas in each paragraph or passage. The materials or passages for independent practice should be different from those used for actual teaching or guided application.

The disadvantage of the direct instruction method of teaching the main idea comprehension skill is that it is teacher-dominated. Students' full participation in the lesson comes at the end. The result is that some lazy students may become fatigued or bored and hence lose interest in the lesson. Another demerit of this method is that it is not ideal for a large group of students. This is so because it involves face to face teaching, showing and guiding the students how to locate main idea. The method requires the teacher to attend to individual children.

2.5.2 **The Discovery Method of Teaching the Main Idea Comprehension Skills:**

Under the discovery method which is synonymous with problem-solving approach, students are not taught in a direct and systematic manner, information about the main ideas in texts. It is more or less an indirect method of teaching the students how to separate important from less important information in texts (Hare & Bingham, 1986). This method involves teaching students the four dominant text structures which they then use to locate important information in text materials. These text structures include, enumeration, time order, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect (Alvermann, 1984; Hare & Bringham, 1986; Vacca & Vacca, 1989; Wood, Flood & Lapp, 1992). These text structures are commonly found in content textbooks. In the discovery method, the teacher leads students to locate the main ideas in texts, through the use of text structure clues. Vacca and Vacca (1989) show that knowledge of text pattern enhances students' main idea construction ability. Students use text pattern or clues to find main ideas in their textbooks. Students are taught

that authors of textbooks convey important idea using any of the four dominant text patterns. Students will also be taught that authors of text materials organise their ideas in hierarchies and that top level ideas are considered importantly or main ideas.

Vacca (1981) and Herber (1970), as cited by Wood, Lapp and Flood (1992), recommend the following steps in teaching text organisational structures to students to enhance their main idea comprehension ability, thus;

Step 1: Define the concept of text structures to students, with examples.

Step 2: Explain to students that their textbooks contain different text patterns which authors use to convey important or main ideas to readers. Tell the students that knowledge of these text structures will enhance their understanding of the reading material.

Step 3: Give example of the text structure under study, through the use of everyday examples. For example; *similarly, in addition, however*, *First,*

Second and *but.* Then ask students to transfer their knowledge to their reading task. If the text structure under study is comparison/contrast, sensitize students towards that signal pattern. One text structure should be taught at a time.

Step 4: Show how the signal words are used in everyday speaking and reading to show that items, events or people are being contrasted or compared. Tell students that we use these text pattern signals such as “to begin with,” “first” “second” `before’, ‘now’, “after”, “when”, “however”, “but”, “because”, “since” etc unconsciously in our every day speaking and reading.

Step 5: Provide students with paragraphs that contain any of the four dominant structures. Guide them to examine the paragraphs for text pattern under study. Explain to students that pattern signals or signal words convey the author’s important information or main idea. Tell them that if they

follow these signal words, they will be able to locate the main ideas of the texts.

Step 6: Divide the class into groups of, say, four. Provide each group with a passage. Each group works independently in a particular text structure. At this stage, students can also work in pairs to identify the text structure under study.

Aulls (1986) also suggests four steps in the direct teaching of the main idea skills. The four steps are verbal explanation, verbal modelling, practice and feedback and independent practice. The first step is the verbal explanation of the concept of main idea. Here, the teacher starts by defining and explaining to students the concept of main idea. The second step is the verbal modeling. This is the active teaching of the main idea skills. Here the teacher teaches and shows the students the techniques and rules of finding main ideas in both narrative and expository texts. At the practice and Feedback' stage, the students are provided with short and simple paragraphs. They read the paragraphs and identify the stated main idea in each, with the teacher guiding them. The teacher,

at this stage, helps and guides students in practicing the tasks of identifying, inferring or constructing the main ideas in short and simple paragraphs or passages. The final step is the independent practice, when students are expected to practice finding the main ideas on their own. Finally, the teacher should sensitize students to text organisational patterns which authors use to develop or convey main or important information to reader. Text patterns such as enumeration, sequence, cause/effect and comparison/contrast with their signal words or phrases should be introduced to students to help them find ides in texts (Herbert, 1973; Niles & Memory, 1977; Alvermann, 1984; Vacca & Vacca, 1989).

Moore and Readence (1980) also identify three methods of introducing the concept of main idea. The first approach is the identification of topic sentence in reading texts or paragraphs. Students are asked to read a passage and then figure out a topic sentence in each paragraph. However, Braddock (1974), as cited by Moore and Readence, observes that topic sentences are rare. The second approach is to allow students read a passage and then ask them to determine for

themselves what the passage is all about or mostly about. The demerit of this method, according to Moore and Readence is that it is assumed that students already have the ability to distinguish a general statement from a body of details or specifics. The last approach involves the use of pictures such as newspaper and magazine. Under this method, the teacher first shows the students how to determine the main idea of a picture. About three or four main idea sentences related to a picture are constructed, with one sentence containing the main idea. Students then choose the correct or best sentence that contains the main idea and match it with the picture. Students are expected to defend their choice as they select the correct main idea statement of a given picture.

Similarly, Alexander, Breen, Davis, Donnely, Heathington, Huff, Knight, Kolker, Tanner, Turner and Wynn (1979), identify the following strategies for teaching the main idea:

i. Cutting the topic sentences out of paragraphs and allowing the students to provide the topic sentences.

ii. The teacher provides students with a series of captions and pictures. He then asks them to match pictures with titles.

iii. Have students suggest titles for passages

iv. Have students write title for stories, or articles.

v. Students write titles for book chapters.

Cushenbery (1969) also suggests the following different strategies for teaching main idea skills:

i. have students read passage of three or four paragraphs. Ask them to choose the most suitable title for the passage from the many titles provided.

ii. Provide each student with a copy of three paragraphs of expository text. Below each paragraph, provide multiple-choose main idea statements, and ask students to select the most suitable main idea sentence.

iii. Delete the title given to a story or article, and ask the students to write an appropriate title for the story or article.

Stephens, Hartman and Lucas (1983) also recommend four steps in teaching the main idea skill. The four steps include finding the topic of the text, locating the main idea sentence, inferring the main idea from the supporting details and constructing the main idea based on the details. The first step deals with the location of the topic of the text. Stephen, Hartman and Lucas (1983) explain that under this strategy, the teacher leads and guides students to find the topic of the reading material. The topic is usually stated in a single word or in a phrase. The topic tells what the entire passage is all about. The second step involves the examination of each paragraph for the main idea sentence. At this stage, the teacher guides the students to proceed from paragraph to paragraph searching for the main idea sentence. The teacher explains to students that the main idea sentence can be found at the beginning, in the middle or end of a paragraph. If there is no sentence that contains or expresses the main idea in each paragraph, then, strategy or step three will be adopted.

In step three, the teacher helps students find the main idea of each paragraph from the supporting details. Step three

is adopted when the main idea is implied. If one sentence cannot be found which expresses the main idea, we must then list the fact or details that the paragraph tells us about the topic (Stephens, Harman and Lucas (1983)). When the main idea is not explicitly stated, students identify the main idea by examining the supporting details of each paragraph. By listing the details of each paragraph, the teacher leads students to see how the details relate to each other. From these details, students are led to determine the main idea of the paragraph by asking WH- questions such as WHO, WHAT, WHEN,

WHERE, WHY and HOW – about the passage or paragraph. The final step is the writing or construction of the main idea based on the supporting details. After listing the details of each paragraph, the students invent a sentence that contains the main idea of each paragraph. The main idea shows how each of the supporting details is related to the other and to the topic of the text.

Direct Instruction Strategy appears to be the most effective and appropriate method of teaching main idea. The general consensus among main idea researchers is that for

students to acquire and use the main idea skills for study, note-taking, scanning, skimming, summarizing and underlining, they must be deliberately and painstakingly taught by direct method (Stephen, Hartman & Lucas, 1983).

2.6 SEQUENCE OF TEACHING THE MAIN IDEA

The teaching of the main idea is not done in a haphazard manner. Rather, it follows a particular plan or order. Baumann (1986) recommends the sequence and scope of teaching the main idea in which the activities or main idea tasks are organised in a developmental order, with the simpler main idea skills being learnt and mastered before proceeding to more complex and difficult main idea skills. That is, students have to learn and master simpler main idea skills before they are being introduced to difficult skills. Baumann's sequence of teaching the main idea contains information about the main idea activity, description of the task (how a particular main idea skill is taught) and the grade level of the learner. The sequence is illustrated thus:

2.6.1 **The Teaching of Main Idea in Lists of Words**

This is an introductory and lower level skill. Here, the students are taught the concept of main idea - in lists of words. The teacher starts by building up the students' background knowledge. He explains to students that when they read or listen to stories, there are 'big ideas' and 'little ideas'. The teacher tells students that the 'big idea' is also called the main idea. The teacher then gives examples of main ideas in lists of words, thus:

Main Idea in List of Words

Fig. 1 Source: Baumann (1986)

The teacher explains to students that on the board or chart, there is a word “clothes, and underneath, there are words such as skirt, shoes, socks, pant, hat and skirt. The teacher tells students that “clothes” is the main idea for this list of words. This is so because all the words in the list are different kinds of clothes.

In the second chart, the teacher explains to students that the main idea for this list of words is “fruits”. He explains that all the words in the list are different kinds of fruits. The teacher tells students that the main idea is therefore, a word that tells us about the whole list. In other words, each word must go with or fit under the main idea. The word ‘fruits’ tells us about the whole list of words. It is therefore the main idea in the list of words.

Next, the word “fruits” is written on the umbrella (picture or diagram of an umbrella). Students are then asked to write the words in the list under the umbrella. The main idea of the list of words (fruits) is written on the umbrella. All the words that go with the main idea are written beneath the umbrella. At this point, the teacher explains that the main idea printed on

the umbrella covers all the words in a list that go with it in the same way as an umbrella covers all the people who stand under it. Students are taught that though little idea (details) are interesting and important, the main ideas are more important because without identifying the main idea, they will not understand what they read. Similarly, it is explained to students that when they master how to identify the main idea in a list of words, it will be easier for them to learn how to find the main idea in paragraphs and passages.

Main Idea in List of Words

Fruits

apple

orange

guava

pears

mango

grapefruit

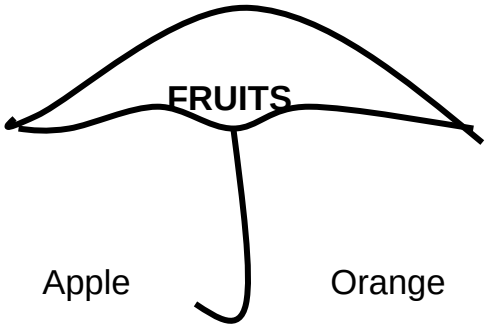

Fig. 2 Source: Baumann (1986)

2.6.2 **The Teaching of Main Idea in Sentences**

At this stage, students are taught to generalise the concept of main idea to the sentence (a larger unit of text). Here, the teacher defines main idea to students as the topic and what is said about the topic. For example, a sentence main idea = topic plus what is said about the topic. That is, a sentence main idea is either a word or many words that tells what the sentence is about.

Students are taught to generalise or apply this definition to single sentences. For example: "*Anzaku, the girl who cannot read, goes to church every Sunday*".

In this sentence the topic is "Anzaku". What is said about the topic is "goes to the church every Sunday". "*Anzaku goes to church every Sunday"* is the main idea (Baumann, 1986).

2.6.3 **The Teaching of Explicit Main Ideas and Details in Paragraphs**

At this stage, students are taught to apply or generalise the concept of main idea and details to paragraph main idea as the topic of the paragraph. It is the sentence that tells what the

entire paragraph is about. A paragraph main idea is a sentence that summarises the entire paragraph. Paragraph main idea = paragraph topic + what is said about the topic. Details or 'little ideas', on the other hand, consist of other information in the paragraph which supports or expands upon the main idea of the paragraph.

At this stage, students are directly taught how to identify the explicit main ideas in paragraphs and to associate supporting details with them. The teacher also discusses the position of explicit main idea with the students. For example, students are taught that explicit main ideas are most likely to be found at the beginning of the paragraph. However, it may be located at the initial position, medial position or final position of a paragraph. The teacher explains to students that the term "topic sentence" may be used to mean main idea sentence. Hence, the term 'topic sentence' is synonymous with main idea sentence in a paragraph (Baumann, 1986).

2.6.4 **Implicit Main Ideas and Details in Paragraphs**

The implicit main ideas and details are introduced after students have mastered the identification of explicit main ideas

and details in paragraphs. The teacher explains to students that not all paragraphs contain explicit main ideas, or directly stated main ideas. In other words, many paragraphs do not have topic sentences. In teaching the implicit main ideas, students are guided to first identify the topic of the paragraph. Then they determine what is said about the topic. Thereafter, students, with the teacher's guidance, compose or invent a main idea statement that summarises the entire paragraph. Students are also taught how to use details in the paragraphs to infer what the main idea is.

Students should verify main idea statements by asking themselves whether or not the main idea sentence which they formulate, tells them about all the details in the paragraph. The teacher explains to students that all details relate to main ideas (Baumann, 1986).

2.6.5 **The Teaching of Explicit Main Ideas and Details in Short Passages**

After students have mastered both the explicit and the implicit main ideas in paragraph, they are taught how to generalise the concept of main idea to short passages-

(passages of about three or more paragraphs). The teacher explains to stude3nts that a passage main idea is the overall main idea of the passage. A passage main idea statement consists of the topic of the passage, which is usually a word or a phrase that tells what is said about the topic. Passage main idea = passage topic plus what is said about the topic. Students are then guided to examine passages for explicit main ideas statements which are usually found at the beginning of the passage or paragraph. To determine the main idea of a passage, students first examine each paragraph for main ideas. Students are then taught to use the paragraph main ideas, which are now passage details to determine the main idea of the entire passage. To verify their choice, students ask questions such as: “Does this passage main idea statement tell me about all the information in the passage?” That is, does the passage main idea statement subsume or summarise all the supporting details or the entire passage? (Alexander, 1976; Baumann, 1986; Joffe, 1988).

2.6.6 **Teaching Implicit Main Ideas and Details in Short Passages**

Here, students are taught how to compose or invent a main idea statement for a short passage that does not contain an explicit passage main idea. Instruction here is similar to task four. Students are guided to examine paragraphs to determine what information is being said about the topic in order to construct a passage main idea. In other words, students inspect paragraphs for details which are used to support or expand upon the main idea statement. They check their choice by asking questions such as: “Does this main idea statement tell me about all the details in this passage?”

2.6.7 **Teaching Explicit Main Idea Outlines for Short Passages**

This is an extension of task five (5). Here, students are taught how to find an overall main idea for a short passage that is directly stated. They are also taught how to put other main ideas in the passage under the bigger, overall main idea. To help students understand how these two different types of main ideas go together, the teacher guides students to produce a main idea outline for short passages. The teacher explains to

students that knowing how to make main idea outlines is very important because it helps them in identifying the main or important information when they read their content textbooks. And it will also help them learn and remember better the important information or ideas in their content textbooks.

The instruction for this skill proceeds thus:

i. Teacher puts up a story or passage on a chart or board, e.g.

Animals are helpful to people in several different ways. Animals give people food. For example, we get beef from cows, we get pork from pigs, and we get eggs from chickens.

Animals are helpful in work and transportation. Horses carry people and pull wagons. Mules can plough fields and carry loads. In some countries, elephants do the work that human beings would not be strong enough to do.

We get other products from animals. All the leather we use for coats, belts, pulses, and sports equipment come from animals such as cows, pigs and even kangaroos. Soap is made from animals, and many chemicals we use in foods and medicines come from animals.

Animals also help by giving people enjoyment. Riding horses is very interesting. Fishing is a sport many

people enjoy, and of course, many people enjoy their dogs, cats, fish or birds.

Source: Baumann (1986).

ii. Students read the passage silently.

iii. Students identify the topic of this passage. The passage is about animals. Find out what is said about the topic.

iv. Teacher explains to students that they are looking for two kinds of main ideas - the main idea that covers everything in the passage and the main idea for parts of the passage (paragraph main ideas).

v. The big main idea for the story or passage above is found at the beginning of the passage. It is the first sentence of the passage: “Animals help people in several different ways.” This sentence tells us the main idea for the entire passage. It is the passage main idea.

vi. To prove that the first sentence of the passage is the main idea of the entire passage, students are guided to examine how each paragraph main idea relates to the passage main idea. Each paragraph shows the different ways in which animals help people.

For example, the first paragraph tells about the food we get from animals. Paragraph two is about how animals are helpful in work and transportation. Paragraph three deals with other products we get from animals, while the last paragraph tells about how animals help by providing people with enjoyment.

vii. Teacher explains that there are topic sentences (main ideas sentences) in each of these paragraphs. These are paragraph main ideas. They are found at the beginning of each paragraph.

viii. Teacher draws up a chart, a table, to illustrate the concept of the whole passage main idea and the individual paragraph main ideas.

A Whole Passage Main Idea Supported by Individual Paragraph Main Ideas

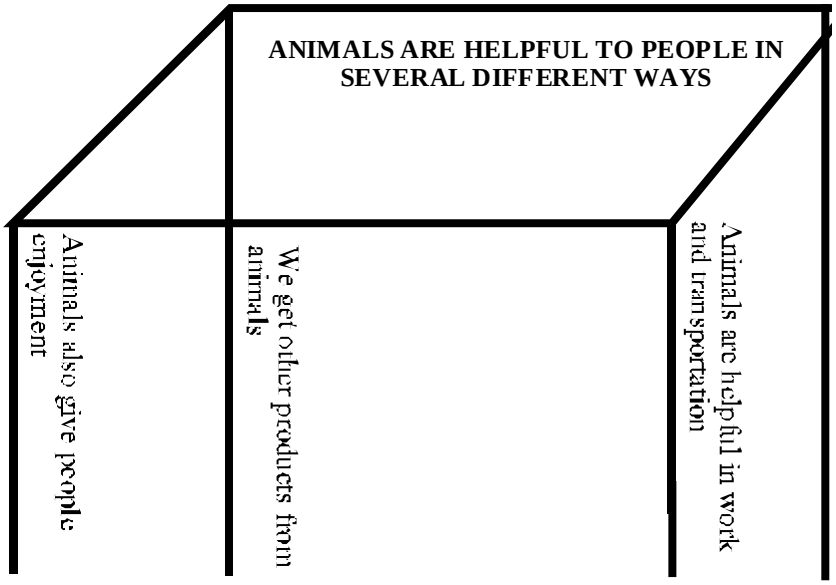

Fig. 3 Source: Baumann, (1986)

The sentence on top of the Table is the entire passage main idea. It summarizes the whole passage. The other sentences are placed on the legs of the Table. These are individual paragraph main ideas. They support and expand upon the entire passage main idea. The passage main idea is at the upper or top level while the paragraph main ideas are at the subordinate level.

ix Teacher makes an outline for the passage. He explains to students that an outline of a passage is the summary of the whole passage. A summary of a passage or story tells the major or main points in a passage, leaving out most of the details.

The main idea outlines for this short passage are shown thus:

Main Idea Outline for Short Passages

Main idea of the passage – *Animals are helpful to people in several different ways.*

Main ideas in the passage:

1. Animals give people food
2. Animals are helpful in work and transportation
3. We get other products from animals _
4. Animals also give people enjoyment.

Source: ***Baumann*** (1986)

x. Teacher explains the outline. At the top of the outline, we have "Main idea of the passage". This is followed by blank spaces. Underneath these blank spaces we also have "main ideas in the passage". This is followed by four numbered blanks. We will now write the whole passage main idea in the first blank spaces and the individual passage paragraph main ideas in the four numbered blank spaces.

At this stage, students are directly taught how to construct main idea outlines for short passages with explicit main idea statements. Students are taught how to compose a two-level outline in which the explicit passage main idea is at the upper level and the individual paragraph main ideas are at the subordinate level (Baumann, 1986).

2.6.8 Teaching Main Idea Outlines for Short Passages - Implicit

This skill is appropriate for SS2 students and above. The procedure or instruction is similar to task 7. The difference is that in this task, students have to infer the two kinds of main

ideas - the passage main idea and the individual paragraph main idea. In main idea outlines for short passages, paragraph main ideas are linked to details, and therefore, are placed at the subordinate level to inferred passage main idea, which is placed at the upper level. Students are taught to use paragraph main ideas as details to infer the entire passage main idea (Baumann, 1986)

2.6.9 Teaching Main Ideas in Long Passages or Content Textbooks

After the students have learnt and mastered tasks 1 - 8, they are introduced to finding main ideas in long passages, such as content area texts or the entire chapters in their textbooks. The main idea skills acquired in the previous tasks or main idea activities are then generalised to content textbooks. At this stage, students are taught to examine long passages for macro structure/top level structure/overall passage main idea, subordinate level main ideas/paragraph main ideas and bottom level ideas or supporting details (Baumann, 1986).

2.7 TEXT STRUCTURES AND MAIN IDEA

Reading specialists (Miles & Memory, 1977; Alvermann, 1984; Finley & Seaton, 1987) define text structure as the way in which authors organise their ideas in a passage. The term “text structure” refers to how writers arrange their ideas in reading materials to convey meanings to the reader (Vacca and Vacca, 1989). There is a general consensus among the reading specialists that knowledge of text structures or patterns facilitates students’ main idea construction ability. Authors use text structures to help readers distinguish important from less important ideas. They also help students follow relationships among ideas (Vacca and Vacca, 1989). The main aim of text pattern, according to Vacca and Vacca (1989) is to assist students become sensitive to the various ways textbook selection can be organised. Vacca and Vacca (1989) also indicate that text structures show how authors organise their thoughts or ideas in hierarchies of top, middle and bottom levels. They explain that the top-level statement conveys the main ideas which are general statements that summarize the entire paragraph. The middle-level statement

conveys supporting ideas which elaborate, illustrate or support the topic-level statement, Then there is the bottom-level statement. Being the last stage of subordination, the bottom-level statement conveys details which describe or expand upon the information above them.

The hierarchical arrangement of ideas in content area materials therefore, indicates that ideas in texts are not of equal importance. Some ideas are more important than others. It shows that some ideas in textbooks are subordinate to others. However, a good number of researchers (Alvermann, 1984; Finley & Seaton, 1987) have shown that many Nigerian secondary students are not aware of text patterns, nor are they aware that some ideas in content textbooks are more important than others. Meyer, Brandt and Bluth (1980) as cited by Schmidt, Barry, Maxworthy and Hueboch (1989), observe that a high proportion of poor readers see their text in a similar manner. According to them, students cannot see the hierarchical relationships which determine important ideas.

They view their content texts as a series of unrelated facts difficult to recall. Such poor readers consider each idea in a passage as equally relevant or irrelevant.

Similarly, Winograd and Bridge (1986) as cited by Schmidt, Barry, Maxworthy and Huebsch (1989), show that some students are less sensitive to main idea. According to them, some students have difficulty recognising the clues which authors use to convey important ideas. Authors of content area textbooks convey important ideas using text organisational patterns. There is therefore, the need for teachers of reading to sensitize students to the different types of text patterns or structures (Clewell and Cliffton, 1983; Finley & Seaton, 1987; Vacca, 1989). Hoskins (1986) as cited by Finley and Seaton (1987), shows that students learn more successful from their textbooks if they are exposed to text organisational patterns. Researchers (Alverman, 1984; Finley & Seaton, 1987; Vacca and Vacca, 1989) have proved that good and expert readers often follow the way in which the writer relates his ideas. Good readers also know that ideas in texts are logically connected to one another. The four (4)

dominant text structures are: Enumeration; time order, cause / effect and comparison/contrast (Herbert, 1973; Niles and Memory, 1977; Alvermann, 1984; Vacca & Vacca, 1989). Each text structure has its own signal words or phrases which authors use to convey important ideas to the readers. Vacca and Vacca (1989) and Alvermann (1984) report that in order to construct main ideas from texts, good and skilled readers use text pattens. Text structures, therefore, are used to signal important ideas to the readers.

Main idea researchers (Donlan, 1980; Moore & Readence, 1980; Duffelmeyer & Duffelmeyer, 1987) have found that students have more difficulty identifying the main ideas of some strictures than others. For example, Hare, Rabinowitz and Schieble (1989) find that students have greater difficulty identifying the main ideas of comparison/contrast and cause/effect texts than the main ideas of listing and sequence texts. According to them, the students encounter greater difficulty identifying or inferring implicit main ideas in texts of all structures. Hare, Rabinowitz and Schieble also find that it is easier for students to identify the main ideas in narrative texts

than in expository materials. They report that the main idea in a narrative text is frequently explicit and clearly located at the beginning of a paragraph (Winograd & Brennan, 1983; Hare & Milligan, (1984) as cited by Hare et al (1989). Expository texts on the other hand, present more difficulty to students. Unlike the narrative texts, the main ideas in expository materials do not appear in the first sentence position of a paragraph. Rather, explicit main ideas in expository texts usually appear in the medial or final sentence in the paragraph. Hare et al, also discover that while narrative texts usually have a simple listing structure which is easy to process, expository texts commonly combine comparison/contrast, cause/effect and sequence text structures (Magnus & Hare, 1986) as cited by Hare et al (1989). These varieties of texts structures make the processing of expository materials more difficult.

Content area textbooks contain various text structures. Authors use these patterns to signal or convey main or important ideas to the readers. Sensitizing students to these text patterns, therefore, enhances their main idea construction ability (Alvermann, 1984).

HIERARCHICAL RELATIONSHIP AMONG IDEAS IN EXPOSITORY TEXT CONTENT PRESENTATION

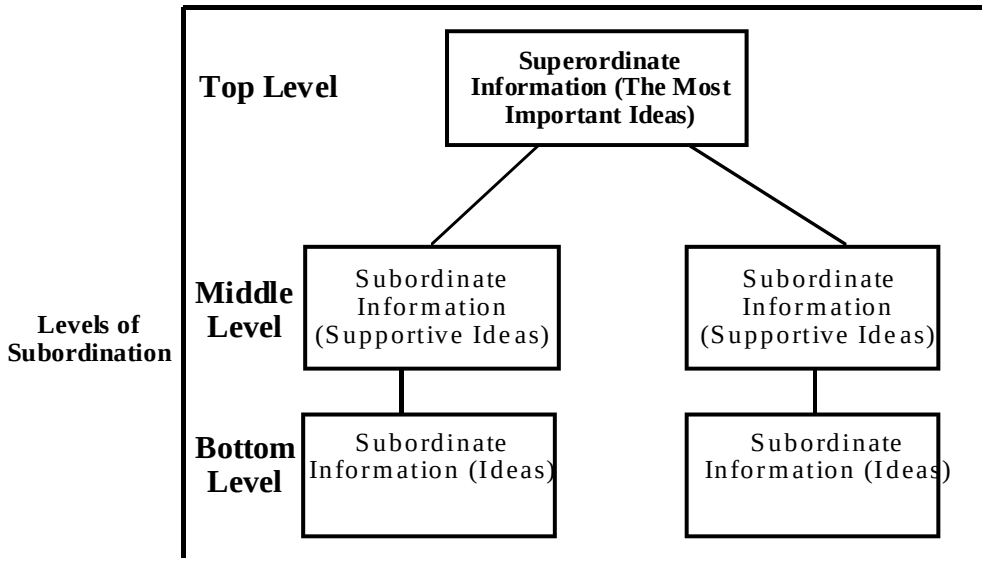

Fig. 4 Source: Vacca and Vacca (1989)

READING SIGNALS

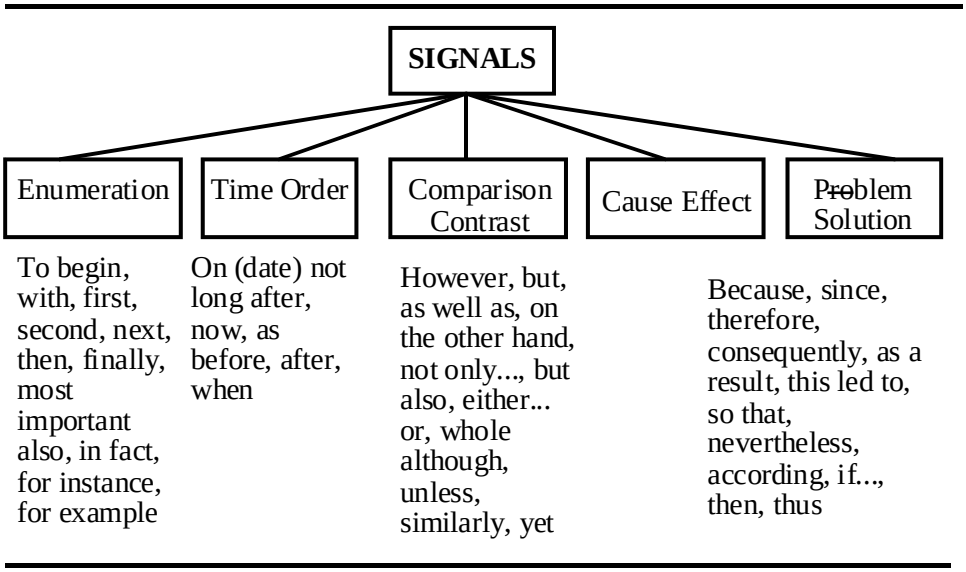

Fig. 5 Source: Vacca and Vacca (1989)

2.8 TEACHING TEXT ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS

Text organizational patterns aid the comprehension and retention of important ideas in texts. Since organizational patterns affect readers' ability to comprehend, critically analyze and recall textual information, it is important that disabled learners receive help in recognizing such patterns (Alvermann, 1984). He therefore suggests the use of Vacca's (1973) list of key words as signal clues for the different organisational patterns, thus:

i. **Simple listing/enumeration**, e.g. to begin with, first, second, next, then, finally, in addition etc.

ii. **Time Order/Sequence**, e.g. on (date), not long after, now, as, before, after, when.

iii. **Cause/Effect**, e.g. because, since, therefore, consequently, as a result, this led to, so that, nevertheless, accordingly, if... then etc.

iv. **Comparison/Contrast**, e.g., however, but, as well, on the other hand, conversely, not only... but also, either... or, while, although, unless, similarly, yet. Simple listing

or enumeration has been found to occur most frequently in content area texts.

Content area texts form the bulk of the reading materials at the secondary level. They are non-fictional materials, and hence, are written to provide knowledge, to inform, tell, show, explain or describe. Academic success from secondary to tertiary institution depends to a large extent on students' ability to read content area texts with maximum comprehension. Authors of content area textbooks convey information using text patterns. Students should, therefore, be sensitized to the different types of text structures and their implications for main idea instruction. Clewell & Cliffton (1983) agree that knowledge of text structure influences both the type and amount of information recalled and comprehended. The better organised the text material, the better the information is comprehended and recalled. Vacca and Vacca (1989) observe that students do not know that main ideas are nor do they know how to find them in texts, until they are taught how authors organise ideas in texts. Not only must students learn how to recognize the author's structure, but they must also be taught

how to use the text structures to comprehend and retain important information.

To teach students text structures, Vacca and Vacca (1989) suggest the following strategies:

i. Search for the main idea in the passage. Determine whether there are signal words that show a pattern which will connect together the ideas throughout the passage.

ii. Examine the text for additional main ideas. See whether these ideas are logically connected to the most important idea.

iii. Outline the relationships among the superordinate and subordinate ideas in the text.

In sensitizing students to the concept of text structures, the teachers should start by explaining with examples what text patterns are. Each pattern or structure should be taught in turn. Thereafter, the students should be provided with sample paragraphs and asked to try to identify the pattern through the examination of each sentence in the paragraph. Students should be taught to look for text pattern in every text they read.

Another method of teaching text patterns to students is suggested by Finley and Seaton (1987), thus:

i. Introducing the four dominant text patterns of simple listing/Enumeration, Time Order/Sequence, Cause/effect and Compassion/contrast. Defining with examples, these patterns, drawing from students' reading experiences. Discuss the patterns with students.

ii. Provide students with unlabelled group of signal words which authors use to indicate a pattern. After identifying each group of signal words, students should be provided with sample paragraphs which they study for signal words and identify the appropriate pattern of information. Some of these paragraphs can be constructed or selected from students' textbooks.

iii. Let students underline signal words in paragraphs. Also, have them underline topic sentences or main idea sentences in order to identify the patterns of each paragraph.

iv. Give students topic sentences and let them anticipate the paragraph patterns each sentence would most

logically introduce by showing signal words. Topic sentences could be selected from students' textbooks.

2.9 REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

The review of related empirical studies takes a critical look at the previous studies that bear resemblance with the present study in order to determine areas or gaps that need to be filled.

Muodumogu (2002) examined the relative effectiveness of three methods of vocabulary teaching at the Senior Secondary School level and discovered that inadequate vocabulary or limited word power is responsible for poor academic performance of Nigerian secondary school students. This study did not deal with the methods of teaching main idea skills – the basic skills needed by students to help them comprehend, recall, and retain what they read. The present study sets out to compare the effectiveness of the direct and discovery methods of teaching the main idea skills.

Hare, Rabinowitz and Schieble (1989) also carried out a study to determine the effects of text structures on students' main idea comprehension ability of Senior Secondary School

Students. Their findings revealed that text structure awareness enhances students' main idea comprehension ability.

They also found out that main ideas in listing structures are easier to identify than those in comparison\contrast, cause\effect and sequence structures. However, this study had a foreign background. Besides, this study examined only one method of teaching and assessing main idea skills. The present study examines two methods of teaching the main idea skills.

Gbenedio (1982) carried out a study at the Primary School level to compare the relative effectiveness of the Individualized Reading Strategy (IRS) and the Conventional Reading Strategy (CRS) methods of reading instruction. The results showed that the IRS is superior to the CRS in terms of reading achievements. However, the two methods are not methods of teaching main idea skills. Rather, they are methods of teaching and assessing reading generally.

The present study deals with the effects of two methods on main idea comprehension ability of Senior Secondary School Students.

Yusuf (1997) also conducted a study at the Primary School level to determine the relative effectiveness of two methods, Direct-reading-thinking activity (DRTA) and vocabulary method on primary school pupils' reading comprehension ability. The results showed that the DRTA method is superior to the vocabulary method of teaching reading comprehension. This study neglects the methods of teaching main idea skills. Besides, the study deals with primary school pupils who are not yet mature readers. The present study deals with Senior Secondary School Students who are at the stage of reading to learn and not at the stage of learning to read.

Obilom (1997) compared the relative effects of Discussion, Lecture and Story-telling methods of teaching Christian Religious Education. The study was conducted at the Senior Secondary School level. His findings revealed that the discussion method is superior to the other methods.

However, the three methods are not methods of teaching main idea comprehension skills.

Though the present study is similar to the foregoing studies, there are some shortcomings and gaps that need to be filled or narrowed. None of the studies reviewed deals with the comparison of the effectiveness of two or more methods of teaching main idea skills. The present study deals with the teaching of main idea skills in a Direct and Discovery manner at the Senior Secondary School level. It is in the light of this that the present study is undertaken to fill or narrow this gap.

2.10 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of relevant literature has shown that the main idea skill is one of the most important reading comprehension skills without which a reader cannot understand what is read (Roe, Stood & Burns, 1978; Moore and Cunningham, 1986; Winograd and Bridge, 1986; Baumann, 1986; Aulls, 1986; Duffelmeyer and Duffelmeyer, 1987; Vacca and Vacca, 1989; Olaofe, 1992; Chukwuma and Otagburugu, 1997). Students' ability to construct the main ideas in texts depends

on factors such as intelligence, prior knowledge, purpose setting and text structure awareness. Readers with adequate prior knowledge of content domain of the text, construct main idea statements automatically, while those who lack prior knowledge of the content domain of the text, have difficulty constructing the main idea statements. There is also a positive and high correlation between reading comprehension and intelligence. The review reveals that students with low or below average intelligence may have difficulty with main idea construction, especially at the higher levels where reading materials are more complex (Oyetunde, 1986; Zakaluk, Samuels & Taylor, 1986; Afflerbach, 1990; Blanton, Wood & Moorman, 1990; Yusuf, 1997; Orogun & Agukwe, 1997).

Moore and Readance (1980), Donlan (1980), Hare and Bingham (1986), Baumann (1986) show that secondary students often have difficulty comprehending their text materials either because they are not taught the main idea comprehension skills or they are poorly taught by their teachers. The teachers of English language are ill-equipped to

effectively teach the main idea skills to their students to help them understand what they read. The review of literature shows that there is the need for teachers of English to formally and actively teach their students the strategies for finding the main ideas to help them read their textbooks with maximum comprehension.

Baumann (1986) and Aulls (1986) strongly recommend that the main idea skills must be directly and formally taught to students to enhance their comprehension of text materials. Teachers must not leave these important skills to chances. For the effective and active teaching of the main idea comprehension skills, Baumann and Aulls recommend the direct Instruction Method and the Discovery Method. The direct instruction method involves the teaching of the main idea skills in a sequential manner, beginning with simpler main idea skills, which must be learnt and mastered before more complex skills are introduced to students. Main idea skills could also be taught to students through sensitizing them to text organisational patterns or text structures. Text structures are clues which authors use to convey important information to

readers. They are used to signal important ideas to readers. Alvermann (1984), Finely and Seaton (1987), Vacca and Vacca (1987), Hare, Rabinowitz and Shieble (1989), Wood, Lapp and Flood (1992) show that knowledge of text structures have been found to enhance students' comprehension of important information in text materials. There are a number of studies on main idea comprehension. But most of these studies centre on the methods of teaching the main idea comprehension. For example, Baumann (1986), Aulls (1986) and hare and Bingham, (1986). They do not deal with the assessment of the effectiveness of any two or more methods of main idea instruction.

Other studies include those of Hare, Rabinowitz and Shieble (1989) and Yusuf (1997). The study by Hare, Rabinowitz and Shieble was designed to determine the effects of text structures on students' main idea comprehension ability. Though the study is on main idea skills, it is not aimed at assessing or comparing the effectiveness of any two or more methods of teaching the main idea. Similarly, the study by Yusuf (1997) was designed to assess or compare the relative

effectiveness of the Direct Reading-Thinking Activity (DRTA) method and the vocabulary method of teaching reading.

None of these previous studies sought to compare the relative effectiveness of the Direct and Discovery methods of teaching main idea comprehension skills. It is against this background that the present study was undertaken to fill the gap.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopted the Solomon-four-Group Experimental Design. As the name implies, the design has four groups of respondents. Of the four groups, two groups are Experimental groups and two are Control groups.

As illustrated below, the first and third groups are the experimental Groups 1 and 2. The T1 stands for pre-test, while T2 represents post - test. The X stands for treatment. The minus sign (-) indicates no pre-test and no treatment. The letter R stands for randomization of the sample. It shows that the assignment or distribution of subjects to sub-groups must be randomized. Under this design, the experimental Group 1

and the Control Group 1 (the first and second groups) receive a pre-test. This was to determine the students' level of knowledge before the commencement of treatment. Experimental Group 1 also received a treatment but Control Group 1 did not receive any treatment. Experimental Group 2 was not pre-tested but received a treatment. This was to

assure the researcher that in the event of any significant difference in the post-test scores of the two Experimental Groups (Experimental 1 and Experimental 2), it is as a result of the effect of treatment and not the effect of pre-test. The Control Group 2 on the other hand, neither received pre-test nor treatment, but received a post-test. This was to check the effect of post-test. It further assured the researcher that the results of the two Experimental Groups were as a result of the effects of treatment.

The researcher had some justifications for adopting the Solomon - four -Group Experimental Design. Some researchers such as Muodumogu (2002) and Ngolar (2001) have used the design successfully. Secondly, it enables the researcher compare many sub-groups. Thirdly, internal invalidity such as selection bias, is adequately checked through the random assignment of subjects to groups. Students are randomly selected and are also randomly distributed to various sub-groups. The result is that each of the groups used for the study is composed of members who have the same characteristics.

In other words, each of the groups is homogeneous in nature.

The design is illustrated in the diagram below:

	R1	T1	X	T2	(EXP.1)
GROUPS	R2	T1	-	T2	(CONTROL 1)
	R3	-	X	T2	(EXP.2)
	R4	-	-	T2	(CONTROL 2)

KEY

R = Randomization of samples

T1 = Pre-test

X = Treatment

\- = no pretest, no treatment.

T2 = post-test.

All the four sub-groups are post tested at the end of the treatment, as indicated in the diagram above.

3.2 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

3.2.1 Population

The study population for this study was made up of all the senior secondary two (SSII) students in Plateau State. The choice of the SSII students was informed by the fact that they

are not yet an examination class. Therefore, the school authorities may allow the disruption of classes or lessons. Another justification was that at this stage, the SS II students should have acquired some basic comprehension skills such as the identification of stated main ideas, to enable them process their content area materials with adequate comprehension. The SSI students are not yet because they have just transited from JS 3 to SS 1, while the SS3 students will be facing their S.S.C.E. The school authorities may not tolerate any disruption of classes or lessons for SS 3 for the purpose of an experiment. See table 1 below.

Table 1: Statistics of the Population of SS11 Students in each School

SCHOOL	POPULATION	SAMPLE DRAWN	M	F	TOTAL	AVERAGE AGE	AREA
A	135	60	36	24	60	19 YRS	Urban
B	140	60	28	32	60	19 YRS	Urban
TOTAL	**275**	**120**	**64**	**56**	**120**		

3.2.2 **Sample**

Out of the study population a sample of 120 SSII students was randomly selected from two Senior Secondary Schools in Langtang North Local Government Area of Plateau State to participate in the study. Both schools were co-educational. This was to avoid gender bias in the selection of subjects.

The choice of two schools in Langtang North was because no single school had up to 120 SS 2 students. The findings from this sample could be generalized to a larger population, since the sample is representative enough.

3.3 **SAMPLING TECHNIQUES**

3.3.1. **Sampling of the schools**

Out of the 22 senior secondary schools in Langtang North Local Government Area, a sample of two senior secondary schools was drawn to participate in the study. A simple random sampling technique was adopted in the selection of the two participating schools. A list of all the Senior Secondary Schools within Langtang was obtained from

the State Ministry of Education Area Inspectorate Office, Langtang North. Each school was assigned a number. The number was then printed on pieces of paper and put in a container. The number was properly mixed. The selection was done by picking any one piece of paper from the container. The number picked was recorded. This method was to forestall selection bias as every member of the population had an equal chance of being selected.

3.3.2 **Sampling of the students**

In order to find out which method was more effective in teaching main idea skills, a sample of 120 SS II students was randomly selected from a total of 2800 to participate in the study. 60 (sixty) students were randomly selected from each school using the ballot system.

The sample of 120 students was further randomly divided into two major Experimental Groups, A and B, with 60 students in each group. To apply the Solomon – Four – Group Experimental Design, each major Group was divided into 4 sub-groups, with 15 (fifteen) students in each sub-group.

Students were randomly assigned to groups. Group A was taught with the Direct method, while Group B was taught using the Discovery method.

Table 2: Random Selection of a sample of 60 students from each school

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	TOTAL
EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS	30	30	60
CONTROL GROUPS	30	30	60
TOTAL	**60**	**60**	**120**

3.4 INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION

3.4.1 Description of the instrument

The instrument for collecting data for this study was Main Idea Identification Test (MIIT). The instrument was adapted from Joffe (1988). The MIIT was made up of pre-test and post-test. Both tests consisted of short reading comprehension passages. The MIIT was constructed by the researcher. Both tests assessed students' main idea comprehension ability. The readability levels of all the passages were determined using the Fry and Fog readability formulas. The researcher adopted these two methods because they have been widely used and are reliable determinants of textbook readability.

Pre-test

The pre-test consisted of five paragraphs, carefully selected from SSII textbooks not in use in the participating schools. The paragraphs were selected from expository and narrative texts. The length of the paragraphs was about 140 words. The pre-test was made up of multiple-choice main idea statements. There were four options labeled A to D. As the

students read the paragraphs, they were required to select the most suitable main idea statements. Each paragraph was followed by four multiple-choice main idea statements. Each correct response was allocated 2 marks while wrong response attracted no mark. The duration for the test was 30 minutes. The pre-test was marked out of 10.

As for the testing procedure, the pre-test was administered to the appropriate groups, Experimental 1 and Control 1 in each of the two main groups, A & B. Research assistants who were trained by the researcher assisted in conducting the pre-test. The pre-test was administered at the same time, but in different classrooms. After the pre-test, the scripts were collected for scoring and processing.

Post-test

The MIIT was the instrument for the post-test. The MIIT consisted of short paragraphs. The Post-test was made up of 10 paragraphs. The MIIT was divided into two parts, A & B. Part A consisted of four paragraphs with openly-stated main ideas. The paragraphs consisted of narrative and expository

passages taken from SSII textbooks. As the students read the paragraphs, they were required to underline the main idea sentence or topic sentence in each paragraph. Part B consisted of 6 paragraphs with implicit and explicit main ideas. Below each paragraph, there were spaces provided. Students were required to read the paragraphs carefully and then write down the sentence that contained main idea (topic sentence) on the spaces provided below each paragraph. The post-test was marked out of 20. Two marks were allocated to each correct response. The duration of the post-test was 4o minutes. The passages for the post-test were selected from a wide range of registers such as Government, Economics, Agriculture, Religion, Education, Law, Medicine, Politics, Sciences and Banking. Only passages with well defined text structures and main ideas were selected. Three passages were used for the post-test.

3.4.2 Procedure for Instrument Development

The development of instrument started with the selection of suitable paragraphs from different SS2 text books. The

paragraphs contained explicit and implicit main ideas and were selected from different registers.

The readability levels of the passages were determined using the Fry and Fog Readability formular (see Appendix Aiii). The paragraphs were then computer-typed, with double spacing for ease of reading. The paragraphs were reproduced according to the number of the respondents. Multiple choice main idea statements were then typed below each paragraph. Four main idea statements, lettered A-D, were constructed below each paragraph.

The next stage was the validation of the instrument before it was administered to the respondents. The instrument was given to experts to determine its validity and reliability.

3.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENT

3.5.1 Validity of the Instrument

When a test measures exactly what it is designed to measure, it is a valid test. The items of the instrument were properly validated before they were administered to respondents. The test items were subjected to expert

assessment or judgment. To ensure that the items of the instrument were valid, the researcher engaged the services of measurement specialists to assess the relevance, adequacy and the comprehensiveness of the text items for measuring students' main idea comprehension ability. The Fry and Fog Readability formulas were used to determine the validity of the instruments.

3.5.2 Reliability of the Instrument

A test is said to be reliable or stable when the items measure consistently whatever it is designed to measure. To estimate the internal consistency of the pretest scores, the Cronbach's coefficient alpha method was used, as shown in table 3 below.

Parallel form reliability of the pretest and post-test was also determined as shown in tables 4, 5,6,7,8 and 9 below.

Table 3: **Internal consistency of pretest using coefficient alpha method.**

Reliability Statistics

Alpha Coefficient	**No. of items**
0.767	5

Item Statistics

	Mean	**Std. Deviation**	**N**
Item 1	0.96	0.88	30
Item 2	0.85	0.84	30
Item 3	1.01	0.79	30
Item 4	0.8	0.84	30
Item 5	0.76	0.77	30

Table 3 above indicates internal consistency of pretest. The coefficient alpha obtained is 0.767. This value indicates the stability of the instrument.

Table 4: Parallel Form Reliability for Experimental Pretest Groups

Statistics	Coefficient
Common Inter-Item Correlation	0.39
Reliability Coefficient	0.76

Table 4 above shows the internal consistency of the Experimental Pretest scores. The reliability coefficient obtained is 0.76. This means therefore, that there is a moderate reliability.

Table 5: Parallel Form Reliability for Control Groups

Statistics	Coefficient
Common Inter-Item Correlation	0.35
Reliability Coefficient	0.73

Table 5 above shows the internal consistency of Control Groups scores. In this table, the reliability coefficient obtained is 0.73. It was an indication of moderate reliability.

Table 6: Parallel Form Reliability for Post-test Experimental Group A Scores.

Statistics	Coefficient
Common Inter-Item Correlation	-.01
Reliability Coefficient	-.22

The table 6 above shows the internal consistency of Post-test scores of Experimental Group A. The reliability coefficient obtained was -.22. Here, the reliability coefficient is moderate.

Table 7: Parallel Form Reliability for Post-test Control Group A Scores.

Statistics	Coefficient
Common Inter-Item Correlation	0.10
Reliability Coefficient	0.54

Table 7 above shows the internal consistency of Post-test scores of Control Group A. The reliability coefficient obtained is 0.54. With this value, it means the reliability is moderate.

Table 8: Parallel Form Reliability for Post-test Experimental Group B Scores.

Statistics	Coefficient
Common Inter-Item Correlation	0.09
Reliability Coefficient	0.51

Table 8 above shows the internal consistency of Post-test scores of Experimental Group B. Here, the reliability value obtained is 0.51. This means the reliability of the test measures is moderate.

Table 9: Parallel Form Reliability for Post-test Control Group B Scores.

Statistics	Coefficient
Common Inter-Item Correlation	-.04
Reliability Coefficient	-.40

Table 9 above shows the internal consistency of Post-test scores of Control Group B. In this table, the reliability coefficient obtained is -.40. This, therefore means that the reliability is moderate.

3.6 PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION

Pretest was administered before instruction commenced. The pretest was administered to Experimental Group 1 and Control Group 1 in each of the two treatment groups, A & B. This was to determine the students' initial achievement levels and also for comparison with post-test scores. Immediately after the pre-testing session, the treatment sessions started for the Experimental Groups in each of the two major groups, A & B. Group A was taught with the Direct instruction model, while Group B was taught using the discovery method. In other words, the two Experimental groups in Group A were taught with the Direct method of teaching main idea skills, while the two Experimental groups in Group B, were taught using the Discovery method of teaching the main idea comprehension skills. The control Groups in the two main Groups, A & B, did

not receive any treatment. The treatment lasted for 12 weeks after which all the groups were post - tested, using the same instrument. The research assistants served as teachers for both the Experimental and Control Groups. Four research assistants were trained by the researcher for two weeks. All were holders of B.Ed English.

Some external or extraneous variables such as natural ability, intelligence, sex, age, fatigue and prior knowledge which could influence the results of the experiment, were properly controlled. These external variables were controlled through randomization. First, the sample of 120 SS11 students from two senior secondary schools was randomly drawn from the entire population of SS11 students. Secondly, the subjects were randomly assigned to major groups, A & B. Thirdly, the subjects were also randomly assigned to all the four sub-groups in each major group A and B. (See Appendix Bi and Bii). Finally, the two treatments or methods, were randomly assigned to major groups A and B.

The randomization process was to eliminate or control any possible bias that would affect the findings of the study.

The randomization procedure was to be certain that treatment was the only variable that was responsible for the differences between experimental and control groups. Randomization process was, therefore, used to ensure that the changes or differences observed between the groups, were not influenced by any extraneous variable.

3.6.1 Procedure for conducting Pre-test

The Pre-test was conducted on Experimental Group 1 and Control Group 1 in each of the two major groups, A & B, before treatment commenced, as explained in 3.6 above. The pre-test was aimed at determining the initial achievement level of the students. The pre-test which was conducted by the researcher himself, consisted of (5) short paragraphs. As the students read the passages, they were required to identify, and select the most suitable sentence that expresses the main idea of the paragraph.. The duration of the test was 30 minutes. Each item was allocated 2 marks. As soon as the pre-test was over, the students' scripts were collected by the researcher for marking and subsequent processing.

3.6.2 Procedure for Conducting Treatment.

Treatment commenced as soon as the pre-test session was over. The two major groups, A & B, were exposed to treatment which lasted for 12 weeks. Each of the two major groups, A & B, was further divided into four sub-groups. This was to enable the researcher apply the Solomon - Four - Group Experimental Design on each of the two major groups, A & B. The Experimental Groups in each of the two major Groups, A & B, received instruction, while the Control Groups in each of the two main Groups, A & B, did not receive any treatment.

Group A was taught with the Direct instruction model, while Group B was taught using the Discovery approach. In other words, the two Experimental Groups in Group A, were taught with the Direct method of teaching the main idea skills, while the two Experimental Groups in Group B were taught using the Discovery method of teaching main idea skills. The Control Groups in Groups A & B did not receive any treatment, but received post - test. Twelve (12) well - structured passages, with clear-cut text structures and main ideas, were

selected from the SSII recommended content area textbooks. The passages contained the four (4) common text - structures, such as enumeration, sequence, cause/effect and comparison/contrast.

All the sample passages were typed double spaced to make for easy reading. Similarly, ten (10) different lesson plans were designed for the treatment session. Each lesson lasted forty (40) minutes. Each of the two treatment groups, A & B, had ten (10) lessons. The research assistants served as the teachers for both the Experimental and Control groups. At the end of the treatment session, all the sub-groups were post-tested. As explained above, the treatment session was conducted as follows: Group A - Direct method of teaching main idea skills. Group B - Discovery method of teaching the main idea comprehension. To determine which of the two methods is more facilitative than the other in the main idea achievements of students, the Solomon - Four-Group Design was applied to the two major groups, A & B. It is illustrated thus:

i **The application of the Solomon - Four -Group Design to Group A (taught with the Direct instruction method).**

Groups:	1	T1	X	T2	(EXP. 1)
	2	T1	-	T2	(CONTROL 1)
	3	-	x	T2	(EXP. 2)
	4	-	-	T2	(CONTROL 2)

Before treatment commenced for Group A, the Experimental group 1 and Control group 1 were pre-tested, as shown above. Thereafter, the Experimental 1 & 2 received treatment with the Direct instruction method of teaching the main idea skills. The Control groups 1 & 2 did not receive any treatment, as indicated above. However, post-tests were administered to all the four sub-groups, as shown above. The results for this group were then computed for comparison with itself and with the scores of Group B.

ii **The application of the Solomon - Four- Group Design to Group B (taught using the Discovery approach of teaching the main idea skills).**

GROUPS:	1	T1	X	T2	(EXP. GROUP 1)
	2	T1	-	T2	(CONTROL 1)
	3	-	X	T2	(EXP. 2)
	4	-	-	T2	(CONTROL 2)

As can be seen from the above design, the Experimental 1 and Control 1 received a pre-test before treatment commenced for the Experimental 1 & 2, using the Discovery method of teaching the main idea skills. The Control Groups 1 & 2 did not receive any treatment, as shown in the diagram above. All the four sub-groups in Group B were, however, post-tested as indicated above. The results for Group B were then computed for comparison with itself and with the results of Group A, with view to accepting or rejecting the hypotheses.

3.6.3 **Procedure for conducting post-test**

Immediately after the treatment session, all the sub-groups in the two major groups, A & B, were subjected to a post-test which lasted for about 40 (forty) minutes. The post-test for the two major Groups was the same. The post-test was administered to all the 8 sub-groups (4 in Group A and 4 in Group B). The post-test was administered on the same day and at the same time. The research assistants assisted in conducting the test. The 4 sub-groups in each Group, were accommodated in different classrooms, under the strict supervision of a research assistant. After the post-test, the scripts were collected group by group for scoring and processing. There were 10 items for the post-test. Each item was allocated (2) marks.

Like the pre-test, the post-test was conducted by the researcher and research assistants. The test items required the students to identify, infer or construct the main idea sentences in each paragraph. Stated or explicit main ideas required the students to identify by underlining the main idea sentences, while the implicit or “hidden” main ideas required

the students to infer or construct the main idea statements from the supporting details in the paragraph. The items also consisted of multiple - choice objective items.

The scores of the four sub-groups in each major group were computed and compared with the pre-test scores after the post-test exercise. The comparison of the pre-test scores with the post-test scores enabled the researcher to confirm or reject the null hypotheses.

3.7 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

In analyzing the data collected, all the 13 hypotheses formulated were tested using the student's raw data. The hypotheses were tested at $P<0.05$ level of significance

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the pretest and posttest mean scores of Experimental sub-group 1 in major group A.

In testing this hypothesis, the t-test statistic was used. The pretest and posttest mean scores of Experimental sub-group 1 in group A, were computed and compared.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the pretest and posttest mean scores of Control sub-group 1 in group A. The t-test statistic was also used to test the second hypothesis. In this way, the pretest and the posttest mean scores of Control sub-group 1 in group A were computed and compared to determine the level of relationship or correlation and the degree of significance that existed.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the pretest and posttest mean scores of Experimental sub-group 1 in group B. To test hypothesis, the t-test statistic was used. This was to determine whether treatment was effective or not.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference in the pretest and posttest mean scores of Control sub-group 1 in group B. The t-test statistic was used in testing this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 5: There is no significant difference in the posttest mean scores of Experimental sub-group 1 and Experimental sub-group 2 in Group A. The t-test statistic was used to test this hypothesis. Here, the post-test mean scores of Experimental sub-group 1 were computed and compared with those of Experimental sub - group 2, in Group A. This was to determine whether pretesting would affect students performance in the post test.

Hypothesis 6: There is no significant difference in the posttest mean scores of Control sub-group 1 and Control sub-group 2, in Group A. The t-test statistic was used to test this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 7: There is no significant difference in the posttest mean scores of Experimental sub-group 1 and Control sub-group 1, in Group A. To test this hypothesis, the t-test statistic was used.

Hypothesis 8: There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of Experimental sub-group 2 and Control sub-group 2, in Group A. The t-test statistic was also used to test this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 9: There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of Experimental sub-group 1 and Experimental sub-group 2, in Group B. The t-test statistic was used to test this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 10: There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of Control sub-group 1 and Control sub-group 2, in Group B. To test this hypothesis, the t-test statistic was used.

Hypothesis 11: There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of Experimental sub-group 1 and Control sub-group 1, in Group B. The t-test statistic was also used to test this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 12: There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of Experimental sub-group 2 and Control sub-group 2, in Group B. The t-test statistic was used to test this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 13: There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of Group A, taught using the Direct method and Group B, taught with the Discovery method. To test this hypothesis, ONEWAY ANOVA was used to compare the post-test mean scores of the four sub-groups in Group A and the four sub-groups in Group B.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSION

The results of the data analysis will be presented and discussed under the following headings:

1) Effects of Direct and Discovery methods on Students' main idea comprehension ability
2) Comparison of performance of Experimental and Control Groups.
3) Comparison of performance of Group A and Group B in the post test.

4.1 RESULTS

Effects of Direct and Discovery methods on students' main idea comprehension ability.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the performance of Experimental 1 (Group A) in the pre-test and post-test.

Table 10: Comparison of Pretest and Post-test Mean Scores of Experimental 1 (Group A)

GROUP A		N	$\overline{X}$	SD	t-value	p-value
EXP. 1	Pre-test	15	3.73	2.71		
					-2.79	0.01
	Post-test	15	6.46	5.20		

Table 10 above shows that the pretest and post-test mean scores of Experimented group 1-were 3.73 and 6.46 respectively. The SD for pretest was 2.71 while that of post-test was 5.20. The t-value was -2.79,; while the p-value was 0.01. The p-value is therefore less than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. That is, p-value > 0.05. Since the p-value is lower than the critical value of 0.05, it implies that a significant difference exists between the pretest and post-test mean scores of Experimental 1 in Group A. The result shows that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of pretest and post-test of Experimental 1 of Group A. This means that this Group performed significantly better in the post-test than in the pre-test. This is due to treatment effect. The null hypothesis is therefore, rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the performance of Control 1 (Group A) in the pre-test and post-test.

Table 11: Comparison of Pretest and Post-test mean scores of Control 1 (Group A).

GROUP A		N	$\overline{X}$	SD	t-value	P - value
CONTROL 1	Pre-test	15	3.4	1.82		
					0.14	0.88
	Post-test	15	3.06	3.01		

From this table, the pretest and post-test mean scores of control 1 in Group A were 3.4 and 3.06 respectively. The pre-test had 1.82 as its SD, while the post-test had 3.01 as the SD. The t-value was 0.14, while the p-valve was 0.88. The p-value is therefore greater than the t-value at 0.05 level of significance. That is, the p-value < 0.05. This means that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of pretest and post-test of control 1 of Group A. This Group, however, performed slightly better in the pretest than in the post-test. The pretest therefore, had no effect on the performance of the Group in the post-test. The null hypothesis is, therefore, accepted. It should be noted that Control 1 in Group A, did not receive any treatment, but was pre-tested and post-tested.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the performance of Experimental 1 (Group B) in the pre-test and post-test.

TABLE 12: Comparison of Pretest and Post-Test Mean Scores of Experimental 1 (Group B)

GROUP B		N	$\overline{X}$	SD	t-value	p-value
EXP. 1	Pretest	15	5.06	1.83		
					-4.50	0
	Post-test	15	3.8	4.37		

The result shows that the pretest mean score was 5.06, while the post–test mean score was 3.8. The pretest had 1.83 as the SD while the post-test had 4.37 as the SD. The t-value was -4.5, while the p-value was 0. Experimental 1 in Group B was subjected to treatment. It was also pre-tested and post-tested. In this table, the result indicated that the p-value is less than the t-value at 0.05 level of significance. That is, p-value>0.05. This means that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of pretest and post-test of Experimental 1 in Group B. This shows that this Group performed significantly better in the pre-test than in the post-test. This could be due to the fact that pre-test paragraphs contained explicit main ideas while post-test paragraphs contained mostly implicit main ideas. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is therefore, rejected.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference in the performance of Control 1 (Group B) in the pre-test and post-test.

Table 13: Comparison of Pretest and Post-test Mean Scores of Control 1 in (Group B).

GROUP B		N	$\overline{X}$	SD	t-value	p-value
CONTROL 1	Pretest	15	4.53	2.06		
					-1.50	0.15
	Post-test	15	1.8	4.34		

Result in this table shows that the pretest mean score was 4.53, while the post-test mean score was 1.8. The SD for pretest was 2.06 while the post-test had 4.34 as the SD. The t-value was -1.50, while the p-value was 0.15. Control 1 in Group B received no treatment. But was pre-tested and post-tested. The result shows that the p-value is greater than the t-value at level of significance. That is, the p-value <0.05. This means that a significant difference exists between the mean scores of pretest and post-test of Control 1 in Group B. The result shows that this Group performed significantly better in the pretest than in the post-test. This difference in performance could be attributed to the effect of pretest since the Group did not receive any treatment because it is a control group. The null hypothesis is therefore, rejected.

Hypothesis 5: There is no significant difference in the performance of Experimental 1 and Experimental 2 (Group A) in the post-test.

Table 14: Comparison of Post-test Mean Scores of Experimental 1 and Exp 2 (Group A).

GROUP A	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-value	P-value
EXP. 1	15	6.4	1.63	0.46	0.72
EXP. 2	15	6.13	2.26		

In table 14 above, the Experimental sub-group 1 was pre-tested. The group received treatment and was also post-tested. The mean score for EXP. 1 is 6.46. The standard Deviation (SD) is 1.63. The Experimental sub-group 2 on the other hand was not pre-tested. But it received treatment. The mean score for Exp. 2 is 6.13. It was also post-tested. Both sub-groups were taught with the same method - the direct instruction method. The t-value is 0.46, while the p-value is 0.72. This is greater than 0.05. That is, p-value is < 0.05. Since the value of P was greater than the t-value at 0.05 level of significance. It means that there was no significant difference in the performance of the two groups. It can be seen that the pretest had little effect on the performance of EXP. 1. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis 6: There is no significant difference in the performance of Control 1 and Control 2 (Group A) in the post-test.

Table 15: Comparison of Post-test Mean Scores of Control 1 and Control 2 (Group A).

GROUP A	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	t-value	p-value
CONTROL 1.	15	3.06	1.79		
				-0.18	0.28
CONTROL 2.	15	3.86	2.35		

In this table, Control 1 received a pretest. It did not receive any treatment, but was post-tested. The mean score for this sub-group is 3.06. Its SD is 1.79. Control 2, on the other hand, did not receive a pretest. It did not receive treatment either. But it received a post-test. The mean score for control 2 is 3.86. The result shows that the t-value is -0.18, while the p-value is 0.28. The p-value is greater than the t-value at 0.05 level of significance. That is, P <0.05. Since the p-value is greater than the t-value at 0.05 level of significance, it means that no significant difference exists between the performance of the two sub-groups. Results show that the two sub-groups have almost the same level of achievement, though Control 2 performed slightly better than Control 1. The difference in the performance of the two sub-groups was not significant. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Comparison of performance of Experimental and Control Groups

Hypothesis 7: There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of Experimental 1 and Control 1 (Group A.)

Table 16: Comparison of Post-test Mean Scores of Experimental 1 and Control 1 (Group A).

GROUP A.	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-value	P- value
EXP. 1	15	6.46	1.63		
				2.45	0
CONTROL 1.	15	3.06	1.79		

In this table, Experimental 1 received a pre-test. It also received treatment and a post-test. The mean score for EXP.1 is 6.46. Its SD is 1.63. Control 1 was also pre-tested. It did not receive any treatment, but was post-tested. The mean score for Control 1 is 3.06. Its SD is 1.79. The t-value is 2.45, while the p-value is 0. The result shows that the p-value is less than the critical value of 0.05. Therefore, p> 0.05. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, it means that a significant difference exists between the performance of Experimental 1 and Control 1. The excellent performance of EXP.1 over Control 1 could be due to the effects of pretest and treatment. The difference in the performance of the two sub-groups shows that treatment was effective. The null hypothesis is hereby rejected. The result further implied that the Direct method is effective in teaching main idea skills.

Hypothesis 8: There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of Experimental 2 and Control 2 (Group A.)

Table 17: Comparison of Post-test Mean Scores of Experimental 2 and Control 2 (Group A).

GROUP A	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-value	p-value
EXP 2	15	6.13	2.26		
				1.43	0
CONTROL 2	15	3.86	2.35		

In this table, Exp. 2 and Control 2 did not receive a pre-test. But Exp. 2 was treated. Control 2 did not receive any treatment. Both groups were post-tested. The mean score for Exp. 2 is 6.13. Its SD is 5.31. The mean score for Control 2 is 3.86. Its SD is 2.35. The t-value is 1.43, while the p-value is 0. That is, $p>0.05$. Since the p-value is less than the t-value at 0.05, it means that there is significant difference between the performance of the two sub-groups. The experimental group performed significantly better than the Control group. This could be due to the effect of treatment which the Control group did not have. The null Hypothesis is thus rejected

Hypothesis 9: There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of Experimental 1 and Experimental 2 (Group B.)

Table 18: Comparison of post-test mean scores of EXP. 1 and EXP. 2 (Group B).

GROUP B	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	t-value	p-value
EXP. 1	15	3.8	2.00	1.62	0.12
EXP. 2	15	2.26	2.49		

In this table the two sub-groups received treatment using the Discovery method of teaching the main ideas. EXP.1 was pre-tested. It was treated and post-tested. The mean score for EXP.1 is 3.8. The SD is 4.37. EXP.2 on the other hand was not pre-tested, but it was treated and post-tested. The mean score for EXP. 2 is 2.26. The SD is 4.13. The t-value is 1.36, while the p-value is 0.12. The value of p is greater than 0.05. $P<0.05$. This means that there is no significant difference in the performance of the two groups. The result shows that the two groups are almost of the same level of achievement. Although the Exp. 1 excelled EXP. 2, the difference was not significant. The pretest enhanced the performance of the students in EXP.1. Since $p<0.05$, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 10: There is significance difference in the post-test mean scores of Control 1 and Control 2 (Group B.)

Table 19: Comparison of Post-test Mean Scores of Control 1 and Control 2 (Group B).

GROUP B	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	t-value	p-value
CONTROL 1	15	1.8	4.34		
				1.14	0.91
CONTROL 2	15	1.73	0.59		

From the above table, both groups did not receive any treatment. They were sub-groups under major Group B. Control 1 was pre-tested, but Control 2 did not receive any pretest. However, both groups were post-tested. The mean score for Control 1 is 1.8 with a SD of 1.14. The mean score for Control 2 is 1.73. The SD is 0.59. The t-value is 1.28 while the p-value is 0.91. The p-value is therefore, greater than 0.05. Since the value of p is greater than 0.05 ($p<0.05$), it means that there is no significant difference between the performance of the two sub-groups. The mean score of Control 1 is slightly higher than that of Control 2. This is due to the effect of pre-test. It could also be mere chance. The null hypothesis is therefore, accepted.

Hypothesis 11: There is no significant difference in the post test means of Exp. 1 and Control 1 (Group B)

Table 20: Comparison of Post-test Mean Scores of Experimental 1 and Control 1 (Group B).

GROUP B	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	t-value	p-value
EXP. 1	15	3.8	2.00	2.55	0.00
CONTROL1	15	1.8	1.14		

From the table above, Experimental 1 was pre-tested. It also received treatment and post-test. The mean score for Exp.1 is 3.8. Its SD is 4.37. Control 1 was also pre-tested. It did not receive treatment, but was post-tested. The mean score for Control 1 is 1.8, while its SD is 4.34. The t-value is 2.559. The value of P is 0.The P-value is less than 0.05. (P>0.05). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, it means that there is significant difference between the means of the two groups. The difference in the performance of the two sub-groups is significant. It is reasonable to say that Experimental 1 performed better than Control 1 because of the treatment it received. This shows that treatment was effective. The null hypothesis is, therefore, rejected.

Hypothesis 12: There is no significant difference in the post-test means of Exp. 2 and Control 2 (Group B)

Table 21: Comparison of Post-test Mean Scores of Experimental 2 and Control 2 (Group B).

GROUP B	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	t-value	p-value
EXP. 2	15	2.26	2.49	2.54	0.02
CONTROL 2	15	1.73	0.59		

In this table, Experimental 2 did not receive a pre-test. But it received treatment. It also received a post-test. The mean score for Exp.2 is 2.26. Its SD is 2.49. Control 2 was also not pre-tested. It did not receive any treatment either. But it was post-tested. The mean score for Control 2 is 1.73. Its SD is 0.59. The t-value is 2.54 while the p-value is 0.02. The result shows that the value of P is less than 0.05. That is, p>0.05. Since the value of P is less than 0.05, it means that a significant difference exists between the means of the two groups. The Exp.2 which was treated performed significantly better than the Control 2 which was not treated. The difference in performance between the two sub-groups is due to the effect of treatment. Treatment was therefore, effective. The null hypothesis is hereby rejected.

Comparison of performance of Group A taught with Direct method and Group B taught with Discovery method

Hypothesis 13: There is no significant difference in the post-test means of Group A, taught with the Direct method and Group B, taught using the Discovery method.

Table 22: Comparison of post-test means of Group A and Post-test means of Group B

GROUP	N	$\overline{X}$	SD
A	60	4.87	2.45
B	60	2.39	1.88

Results presented in Table 22 above indicated that students in Group A, who were taught main idea skills with the Direct Method, had an average score of 4.87 while those in Group B, who were taught using the Discovery method, had an average score of 2.39. Students in Group A therefore had higher scores than those in Group B. one can therefore conclude that it was the method of teaching that made one group to achieve higher scores than the other group. Group A therefore performed significantly better than Group B in the post-test. It is therefore reasonable to assert that the Direct method is more effective than the Discovery method in teaching main idea skills to the students. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

4.2 DISCUSSION

Results presented in table 10 showed that the students in Experimental 1 (A) had a mean score of 3.73 in the pre-test and 6.46 in the post-test. It means therefore, that the students performed better in the post-test than they did in the pre-test. The post-test results therefore, indicated that the students' improvement was due to the effect of treatment.

In table 11, the results indicated that the students in Control 1 (A) who did not receive any treatment, had a mean score of 3.4 in the pre-test and 3.06 in the post-test. The students in this sub-group did not show any improvement in the post-test because they were not treated.

Results in table 12 indicated that students in Experimental 1 (B) had higher scores (5.06) in the pretest than in the post-test (3.8). This means the students in this sub-group performed better in the pretest than in the post-test. This was probably due to mere chance.

In table 13, the results showed that the students in Control 1(B) also performed better in the pre-test (4.53) than they did in the post test (1.8). The superior performance of this

sub-group in the pretest could be due to mere chance. The pre-test administered to this sub-group did not have any effect on their post-test performance. This sub-group did not receive any treatment but was pre-tested.

It was also found in tables 14 and 18 that students in Experimental group 1 (A), taught with the direct method, performed better in the post-test than those in the Experimental

group 1 (B), taught with the discovery method. The Experimental group 1 (A) had an average score of 6.4, while the Experimental group 1 (B) had an average score of 3.8. The difference in scores between the two sub-groups could be attributed to difference in teaching methods, since some extraneous variables such as natural ability, intelligence, sex, age, past experience motivation, and fatigue, were properly controlled through random assignment of subjects to groups. These findings confirm the assertion of Oyetunde (1986), Vacca & Vacca (1989) and Oyetunde (1996) that there is a close correlation between a teaching method and learning or student's achievements. Results obtained in table 14, indicated that though both the Experimental group 1 (A) and

Experimental group 2 (A) were taught with the same method, students in Experimental group 1 (A) performed slightly better than those in Experimental group 2 (A) in the post-test. The insignificant difference in scores between the two sub-groups was probably due to the effect of pretest on the Experimental group 1 (A). Prior knowledge or past experience probably influenced the post -test performance of the

Experimental group 1 (A). This is in agreement with Afflerbach's (1990) assertion that readers with adequate prior knowledge of the topic of the text, construct main idea statements better than readers with low or inadequate prior knowledge of the topic of the text. From table 16, the results showed that students in Experimental group 1 (A) taught with the direct method, performed significantly better in the post-test than those in the control group 1 (A) that did not receive any treatment. The difference in score between the two sub-groups could be attributed to the effect of treatment. Finding from this table revealed that the experimental students who received direct instruction from their teachers, performed better than those in the Control group who were expected to learn or acquire main idea comprehension skills on their own or by chance. These findings, therefore, support the assertion of Hare and Bingham (1986) and Baumann (1986) that students who are taught main idea comprehension skills directly by their teachers, perform better than those who have not been introduced to any method of finding main ideas in texts.

It was also found in table 18 that though students in Experiment group 1 (B) and those in Experiment group 2 (B) were taught with the same method (Discovery method), the Experiment group 1 (B) had higher scores in the post-test than those in the Experiment 2 (B). Since the Experiment group 1 (B) was pretested, it would be reasonable to attribute the difference in scores between the two sub-groups to the effect of pretest which enhanced the post-test performance of the Experimental group 1 (B). The findings in table 20, support the assertions of Baumann (1986), Finley and Seaton (1987) and Oyetunde (1996) that students who are aware of text structures and follow them in their reading assignments, comprehend, retain and recall main ideas better than those who are not. In this table, Control group 1 (B) was not exposed to text structure awareness, though the group was pre-tested and post-tested. The average score of Experiment 1 (B) was 3.8 while that of Control group 1 (B) was 1.8. The difference in scores between the two sub-groups could be due to the treatment the Experiment 1 (B) received.

In table 22, the results indicated that students in major Group A, who were taught with the Direct Method had a mean score of 4.87, while those in Group B, who were taught with the Discovery method had a mean score of 2.39. Students in Group A therefore had higher scores than those in Group B. Group A therefore performed significantly better than Group B in the post-test. Based on the superior performance of the students in Group A, it is reasonable to assert that the Direct method is more effective than the Discovery method. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following are the major findings of the study:

1. the Direct method was found to be more effective than the Discovery method, though both methods were effective in teaching the main idea skills,
2. Students who were aware of text structures in their reading assignment, comprehend the author's major ideas better than those who were not aware of text-structures.
3. Students who were taught main idea skills using the Direct method performed significantly better than those who were not exposed to any method of teaching main idea skills.
4. Treatment had significant effect on the performance of all the Experimental Groups in the post-test. All the students in Experimental Groups showed improvement in the post-test.

5. All the Control Groups in A and B that were pre-tested performed significantly better in the post-test than those that did not receive a pretest.
6. All the Experimental Groups in major Groups A and B performed significantly better than all the Control Groups in major Groups A and B.
7. Students who were taught main idea skills using the Discovery method performed better than those who were not taught any method of finding main ideas.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The study has shown that students can be taught how to identify main ideas in both narrative and expository texts. That if students are systematically taught main idea comprehension using the direct and discovery methods, students' ability to understand what read will improve.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended.

1. Teachers of English at the secondary school levels should ensure that this important skill is not left to chance. The main idea skills should be formally, directly and systematically taught to students, to help them comprehend, retain and recall better what they read. The skill should be taught in a systematic manner, beginning with simpler skills such as finding main idea in lists of words.
2. Research has shown that text structure awareness enhances students' main idea comprehension ability. Teachers of English should therefore teach the students the four dominant structures such as enumeration, cause /effect, comparison /contrast and sequence /time order. Each of these structures has its own reading signals which authors use to cue main ideas. Teachers should sensitize students to these reading signals by guiding them during reading comprehension lessons to identify

the signals in reading passages. Teachers should help students follow the reading signals such as first, second, similarly, however, but, because, then etc. to locate the author's major ideas.

3. Purpose setting as a pre-reading activity is known to enhance students' comprehension of major ideas in text materials. Students reading should be purposeful and directed or guided. Students should always have a goal in mind as they read their text books. This will enhance the comprehension of the materials being read. Teachers should, therefore, set purpose questions to guide and motivate the students before reading exercise begins.

5.4 LIMITATIONS

The target population and the sample drawn constituted another limitation to the study. Both the population and the sample size were not large enough to generalize the findings of the study to the entire country. Similarly, the restriction of the area of study to Plateau State could not make room for the findings of the experiment to be generalized outside the state or to a larger population.

The design of the study (the Solomon-Four-Group-Design) does not make room for a wider scope or coverage. The design consists of four groups. Hence, the larger the sample, the more difficult it is to control the numerous sub-groups within the major groups.

5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

In view of some perceived limitations of this study, the following suggestions are made for further researches:

i) A further research should be carried out to determine the effects of variables such as school type, school location and gender on students' main idea construction ability.

ii) A further study should be conducted in this area to support or confirm the superiority of the direct method over the discovery method of teaching the main idea skills. The present study could be replicated, using a larger sample and a different design.

iii) The same study could be replicated using a different target population or subjects, say, the university undergraduates.

5.6 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

i) The study has shown that direct teaching of main idea is more effective in a second language situation where exposure to the language is very limited.

ii) That the students learn what they are taught directly by their teachers.

iii) Different topics in English require different methods.

iv) The study has also shown that main idea comprehension skills should be formally and systematically taught to students.

REFERENCES

Afflerbach, P. P. (1990). The influence of prior knowledge on expert readers' main idea construction strategies. *Reading Research Quarterly, xxv* (1), 31-46.

Alexander, J. E., Breen, L. G., Davis, A. R., Donnelly M. M., Hartington, B. S., Huff, P. E., Knight, L. N., Kolker, B., Tanner, N. B., Turner, T.N., & Wynn, S.J. (1979). *Teaching reading*. Totowa: Little Brown.

Alexander, C.F. (1976). Strategies for finding main idea. *Journal of Reading, 19(4),* 299 - 301.

Alvermann, D.E. (1984). Helping the LD learner read in the content areas. *Reading in Content Areas, 3(4),* 41-50.

Anderson, P.S., & Lapp, D. (1988). *Language skills in elementary education* (4th ed.) New York: Macmillan.

Andzayi, C., & Umolu, J. (2002). *Reading instruction in primary and secondary schools.* University of Jos: Department of Special Education.

Arnold, M.T. (1981). Teaching themes, thesis, topic sentences and clinchers as related *concepts. Journal of Reading, 24(5),* 373 - 376.

Aulls, M.W. (1986). Actively teaching main idea skills. In J.F. Baumann (Ed.), *Teaching main idea comprehension* (pp. 1-4). Newark DE: International Reading Association.

Awotunde, P. O., Ugodulunwa, C. A., & Ozoji, E.D. (1997). *Practical steps to research in education*. Jos: Deka Publications.

Baumann, J. F. (1988). *Reading assessment: An instructional decision-making perspective.* Columbus: Merrill Publishing Company.

Blake, K.A. (1974). *Teaching the retarded.* Georgia: Prentice-Hall.

Blanton, W.E., Wood, K.D., & Moorman, G.B. (1990). The role of purpose in reading instruction. *The Reading Teacher, 43(7),* 486-492.

Clewell, S. F., & Cliffton, A.M. (1983). Examining your textbook for comprehensibility. *Journal of Reading*, *27(3),* 219-224.

Chukwuma, H. & Otagburuagu, E. (1987). *English for academic purposes*. Onitsha: Africana-Fep Publishers Limited.

Clay, M. (1935). *The early detection of reading difficulties (3rd ed.)*. New Zealand: Heinemann.

Cunningham, J.W., & Moore, D.W. (1986). The confused world of main idea. In J.F. Baumann (Ed.), *Teaching main idea comprehension.* (pp1-17). Newark DE: International Reading Association.

CushenBery, D. C. (1969). *Reading improvement in the elementary school*. New York: Parker Publishing Company.

Davis, S.J., & Winek, J. (1989). Improving expository writing by increasing background knowledge. *Journal of Reading, 33(3),* 178-181.

Donlan, D. (1980). Locating main ideas in history textbooks. *Journal of Reading, 24(2),* 135-139.

Duffelmeyer, F.A. & Duffelmeyer, B.B. (1987). Main idea questions on informational reading-inventories. *The Reading Teacher, 41(2),* 162-165.

Duin, A.H., & Graves, M.F. (1987). Intensive vocabulary instruction as pre-writing technique. *Reading Research Quarterly, XXXII(3),* 311-313.

Ekpenyong, B. (1999). Literacy as a weapon for fighting political oppression. In *Literacy and Reading in Nigeria,* Vol. 8, Nos. 1 &2; Reading Association of Nigeria.

Ekwall, E.E., & Shanker, J.L. (1985). *Teaching reading in the elementary school*. Columbus: Merrill publishing company.

Ekwall, E.E. (1985). *Locating and correcting reading difficulties (4th ed.).* Columbus: Merrill publishing company.

Fagbemi, O. (1997). Literacy, the reading culture and national development: Lessons for Nigeria. In *Literacy and Reading in Nigeria,*Vol. 7, Reading Association of Nigeria.

Finley, C. D., & Seaton, M.N. (1987). Using text patterns and question prediction to study for tests. *Journal of Reading, 31(2),* 124-132.

Fry, E. (1963). *Teaching faster reading: A manual.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fry, E. (1977). Fry's readability graph. *Journal of Reading*, *20, 242-252.*

Fry, R.W. (1994). *How to study: Improve your reading.* Hawthorne: Carol Press.

Gomwalk, S. (2003). Reading habits of selected secondary school students in Plateau State*. In journal of educational forum.* Department of Arts and Social Science Education: University of Jos.

Goodman, K.S., Smith, E.B., Meredith, R., & Goodman, Y.M. (1987). *Language and thinking in schools: A whole-language curriculum. (3rd ed.);* New York: Richard C. Owen Publishers.

Guthrie, J.T. (1981). *Comprehension and teaching*. *Research Reviews.* London: International Reading Association.

Harre, V. C., Rabinowitz, M., & Shieble, K.M. (1989). Text effects on main idea comprehension. *Reading Research Quarterly, XXIV(1).* 72-87.

Harre, V.C., & Bingham, A.B. (1986). Teaching students main idea comprehension: Alternatives to repeated exposures. In J.F. Baumann, (Ed.), *Teaching main idea comprehension (pp. 178-193).*Newark DC: International Reading Association.

Heilman, A.W., Blair, T.R., & Rupley, W.H. (1985). *Principles and practices of teaching reading (6th ed.).* Columbus: Merrill publishing company.

Imam, H. (2004). Literacy and readership: A survey of reading habits of education students in the University of Abuja*. Literacy and Reading in Nigeria,* Vol. 10, No1, (205 – 212).

Ikonta, Nonye R. (2002). Improving the literacy level and reading ability of selected secondary school students in Lagos metropolis through practice of some desirable reading skills. *Literacy and Reading in Nigeria,* Vol.9, No.2, 247-255.

James, S. (1984). *Reading for academic purposes*. London: Edward Arnold Publishers.

Jatau, M.N. (2000). Aspects of reading readiness in children. In B.C. Ushie (Ed.), *Fundamentals of primary education studies in Nigeria (pp 61-71) Jos:* Pinnacle Investments and Publication Press.

Joffe, I. L. (1988). *Opportunity for skillful reading (5th ed.).* Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Lerner, J.W. (1993). *Learning disabilities: Theories, diagnosis and teaching strategies.* (6th ed.), Houghton: Miflin Company.

Mason, J.M. & Au, K.H. (1986). *Reading instruction for today*. Glenview: Scott, Foresman and company.

Miligan, J.L. (1986). The seven most common mistakes made by remedial reading teachers. *Journal of Reading,* 30(2), 140-143.

Moore, D.W., & Readence, J.E. (1980). Processing main ideas through parallel lesson transfer. *Journal of Reading, 23(7), 589-593*.

Nessel, D. (1988). Channeling knowledge for reading expository text. *Journal of Reading, 32(3), 231-235.*

Nwogu, K., & Nwoke, A. (2002). *A handbook on teaching of English language in Nigerian schools*. Jos: Mono Expressions Ltd.

Obah, T. Y. (1984). Teaching note-taking in the classroom. *The Nigerian Language Teacher, 5(2),* 37-43.

Obah, T.Y. (1987). Improving reading ability at the secondary level in Nigeria. *Journal of English Studies, 4, 87-97*.

Obanya, P. (2003). *Towards a reading society.* In Arua E. Arua (Ed.), *Reading for all in Africa.* University of Botswana: International Reading Association.

Odejide, B. (1997). Reading education in Nigeria. In K.A. Odutola, S. Oladeine, Adenji, Olayinwola & J. Anikulapo (Eds.), *Reading empowers: Proceedings of the workshop held in Kaduna (pp. 34-38).* Lagos: Promote the Reading Culture.

Okonkwo, U.M. (2004). Enhancing learners' reading skills through cognitive instruction*. Literacy and Reading in Nigeria*, Vol. 10, No1 (34 – 40).

Olaofe, I.A. (1992). *Communicate English: A rapid improvement language course for secondary and tertiary institutions.* Zaria: Tamaza Publishing Co. Ltd.

Olugbodi, S. A. (1999). Childhood literacy: A pre-requisite for national development. In *Literacy and reading in Nigeria,* Vol. 8, Nos 1 &2, Reading Association of Nigeria.

Oluikpe, B.O.A (2002). *The use of English for higher education (Ed)*. Intec Printers Limited; Ibadan.

Omojuwa, R.A. (1982). A literacy policy for the Nigerian education system. *Literacy and Reading in Nigeria, Vol.1 (33 - 48).* Zaria: ABU Press.

Omojuwa, J. O. (1985). Introduction to literacy skills in two languages: a sequential approach. *Literacy and Reading in Nigeria, Vol. 2,* (34 - 48). Zaria: A. B. U Press.

Onwukeme, S.I. (2000). Towards improvement in reading comprehension: Developing the skill of prediction. *Journal of Educational Studies, 6(1),* 120-124. Jos: University of Jos Mono Expressions.

Orogun, R.E. & Agukwe, E.L. (1997). Achieving reading objectives through purpose setting. In T.O. Oyetunde, J.S. Aliyu, A. Nwoke & A.F. Miri (Eds.), *English Teaching Improvement,* (pp. 262 - 268). Jos: LECAPS Publishers.

Osakwe, N.N. (1999). The nature of students' reading problems at the tertiary level. *Literacy and reading in Nigeria, Vol. 8 1&2, (138-147);* Awka: Nnamdi Azikiwe University.

Osakwe, N.N. (2002). Teaching reading in schools: A survey of English and non-English Language teachers' attitudes in Jos, Nigeria. *Literacy and Reading in Nigeria. Vol. 9 (2) (77-86).* Awka: Nnamdi Azikiwe University: University Press.

Osisanwo, W. (1989). Reading efficiency and success at the senior secondary school certificate English language examination. *Literacy and Reading in Nigeria*. *Vol.4, (231–241).* Zaria: A.B.U. Press.

Otto, W., Peters, C.W., & Peters, N. (1977). *Reading problems: A multi-disciplinary perspective reading*. Mass: Addison Wesley Publishing Company.

Oyetunde, T.O. (1986). *Teaching reading comprehension and summary writing in the secondary school: Perspectives and strategies*. Jos: Museum Press.

Oyetunde, T.O. (1987). Students' reading processing strategies on a science selection: Implications for science teaching. *Nigeria Educational Forum 10(2),* 217-223. Institute of Education: ABU Zaria.

Oyetunde T. O. (1991). *Helping children become good readers: A guide for parents and teachers.* Jos: Akanji Printing Press.

Oyetunde T.O. (1996). Teaching reading comprehension. In Wilson V. Famwang, T.O. Oyetunde, P.O. Awotunde, Sunday N. Wuyep & M.L. Ango (Eds.), *Effective Lesson Planning and Delivery* Vol.1. (pp. 139 - 142) Jos: LECAPS Publishers.

Oyetunde, T.O. & Aboki, F.A. (1998). *Teaching reading in primary schools.* Vol.1. Jos: LECAPS Publishers.

Oyetunde, T.O. & Muodumogu, C.A. (1999). *Effective English teaching in primary and secondary schools*: *Some basic considerations and strategies*. Jos: Conference on Educational Improvement.

Quandt, I.J. (1977). *Teaching reading: A human process*. Chicago: Rand McNally Publishing Company.

Roe, B.D., Stoodt, B.D. & Burns, P.C. (1978). *Reading instruction in the secondary school.* Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Company.

Schmidt, C.M., Barry, A., Maxworthy, A.G. & Huebsch, W.R. (1989). But I read the chapter twice. *Journal of Reading*, *32(5).* 428-432.

Simons, S.M. (1989). PSRT - A reading comprehension strategy. *Journal of Reading, 32(5).* 419-426.

Smith, N.B. (1963). *Be a better reader*. *(2nd ed.)*. New York: Prentice-Hall.

Spache, G.D. & Spache, E.B. (1977). *Reading in the elementary school*. *(4th ed.).* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Sparks, J.E. & Johnson, C. E. (1970). *Reading for power and flexibility*. Cal: Beverly Hills.

Strang, R. (1978). The nature of reading. In J.L. Chapman, & Czerniewska, *(Eds.)*, *Reading from process to practice*. London: Open University Press.

Stephens, T.M. & Hartman, L. (1983). *Teaching children basic skills: A curriculum handbook. (2nd ed.),* Ohio: Charles E. Merrill.

Turner, T.N. (1979). Comprehension: Reading for meaning. In E.J. Alexander, L. G. Breen, A.R. Davis, M. M. Donnelly, B.S. Hartington, P.E. Huff, L.N. Knight, B. Kolker, N.B. Tanner, T.N. Turner, & S.J. Wynn. *Teaching Reading*. Canada: Little Brown.

Umolu, J.J. (1997). Reading and reading-instruction at the primary and secondary school levels: State of the art and strategies for improvement. In T.O. Oyetunde, J.S. Aliyu, A. Nwoke & A.F. Miri (Eds.), *English Teaching Improvement,* (1-13). Jos: LECAPS Publishers.

Umolu, J.J. (1999). New cloze criterion scores for Nigerian readers: Implications for secondary education. *Journal of Educational Improvement, 2,* 27-35, Jos: Conference for Educational Improvement.

Umolu, J.J. & Oyetunde, T.O. (1988). A study of secondary school students' rate of reading comprehension. *Nigeria Educational Forum, 11(2),* 219-226.

Unoh, S.O. (1972). *The reading difficulties of students in a Nigerian University*: *Their environmental correlates and psycholinguistic implications*. Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Ibadan.

Unoh, S.O. (1982). *An exploratory survey of the place of Language Arts in Nigerian education: A preliminary report*. Ibadan: University Press.

Unoh, S. O. (1983). Reading improvement in Nigeria as a multilingual nation: Problems and prospects. In S. O. Unoh, R. A. Omojuwa, S.K.M. Crow (Eds.), *Literacy and Reading in Nigeria, Vol. 1,* (1 - 32), Zaria: A.B.U. Press.

Uya, G.E. (2004). Strategies for promoting good reading habits among junior secondary school students. *Literacy and reading in Nigeria,* Vol.10, No. l, (177-184)

Vacca, R.T. & Vacca J.L. (1989). *Content area teaching (3rd ed.).* Scott: Foresman Company.

Wood, K.D., Lapp, D., & Flood, J. (1992). *Guiding readers through text: A review of study guides*. Newark, DC: International Reading Association.

Winograd, P.N. & Bridge, C.A. (1986). The comprehension of important information in written prose. In J.F. Baumann (Ed.), *Teaching main idea comprehension, (pp.18-41).* Newark DC: International Reading Association.

Yusuf, H.O. (1997). Effects of two instructional methods on pupils' reading comprehension. In B. Abe, B. Lawal, E. Onukaogu, & T. Jegede (Eds.), *Literacy and Reading in Nigeria, Vol.7.* 425-434.

Zakaluk, B.L., Samuels, S. J., & Taylor, B.M. (1986). A simple technique for estimating prior knowledge: Word association. *Journal of Reading, 30(1)*. 56-61.

APPENDICES
APPENDIX Ai

SCHEDULE OF EXPERIMENTAL TREATMENTS

WK	DAY	LESSON	GROUP	TOPIC	INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY	OBJECTIVE
1	1	1	A	Explicit main ideas and details	Explain what a main idea is. Teach students the rules for how to identify, infer or generate main ideas in text materials.	Students should be able to identify explicit main ideas in short passages.
		2	B	Enumera-tion structures	Define or explain with examples what text structures/pattern are. Show examples of simple listing pattern in everyday conversations. Tell students that authors use text pattern as clues to signal main points in text materials. Guide them to examine short passages for simple listing structures.	The students should be able to identify listing structures which they can use to locate main ideas in passages.
	2	1	A	Explicit main ideas and details.	Same strategy as above.	Same objective as above.

		2	B	Enumeration structures	Same strategy as for Control Group 1 above	Same objective as for B above.
2.	1	1	A	Implicit main ideas and details.	Explain with examples what implicit main ideas are. Teach students the rules of finding implicit main ideas. Show them how to infer implicit main idea from the supporting details. Provide students with passages with implicit main ideas. Guide them to use details to infer implicit main ideas.	Students should be able to infer or construct implicit main ideas using details as clues.
2	1	2	B	Sequence structures	Provide definition/explanation and examples of these patterns, from daily conversation. Provide students with signal words that go with these patterns. Guide students to identify sequence structures in short passages.	Students should be able to identify sequence patterns to help them locate topic sentences in the passages provided to them.
3	1	1	A	Implicit main ideas and details.	Same strategy as above.	Same objective as above.

		2	B	Sequence structures	Same strategy as above.	Same as above.
	2	1	A	Passage main idea and paragraph main idea.	Explain that a passage main idea is the overall main idea of the entire passage. Provide	Students should be able to tell passage main ideas from paragraph main ideas.
	3	2	B	Comparison /contrast structures.	Explain these structures with examples. Provide signal words that show comparison/contrast structures. Guide students to use these patterns to locate main ideas in texts.	Students should be able to use these patterns to locate main ideas in textbooks.
	4	POST -	TEST FOR	ALL THE	GROUPS.	

APPENDIX Aii:
MODEL LESSON PLANS FOR TREATMENT

MODEL LESSON 1 (DIRECT INSTRUCTION METHOD)
PASSAGE 1: USES OF ANIMALS

Animals are helpful to people in several different ways. Animals give people food. For example, we get beef from cows, we get pork from pigs and we get eggs from chickens.

Animals are helpful in work and transportation. Horses carry people and pill wagons. Mules plough fields and carry loads. In some countries, elephants do the work that human beings would not be strong enough to do.

We get other products from animals. All the leather we use for coats, belts, purses, and sports equipment come from animals such as cows, pigs and even kangaroos. Soap is made from animals, and chemicals we use in foods and medicines come from animals.

Animals also help by giving people enjoyment. Riding horses is very interesting. Fishing is a sport many people enjoy, and of course, many people enjoy their dogs, cats, fish or birds.

SOURCE: **Baumann (1986:161)**

Subject: Reading Comprehension.

Lesson Topic: Identification of explicit main ideas and details.

Class: S.S. II (Group A) Exp. 1 & 2.

Ability: Average

Sex: Mixed

Date: 12/11/03.

Duration: 1hr 20 min.

Previous Knowledge: This is the first lesson on main idea skills.

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

(a) define the term “main idea”.

(b) apply the rules they have learnt to locate the main ideas and details in sample paragraphs.

(a) distinguish topics from main ideas.

(b) suggest topics for sample passages.

Teaching Aids: Sample passages.

Development/Procedure:

Step 1: **Introduction -** The teacher introduces the lesson by telling students that today they are going to learn about the “main ideas”. The teacher defines and explains the concept of “main idea” to students, thus: The term “main idea” could mean the **gist, important information, key word, key point, topic sentence, theme, central focus, central idea, etc.** All these phrases and terms express important information. The main idea is, therefore, defined as “a general statement that tells what the whole paragraph is

about. It is a general statement that summarizes the entire paragraph. Every paragraph deals with only one main idea. The other sentences in the paragraph are usually specific details that exemplify or illustrate the main idea. Details are related to the main idea. They support and expand upon the main idea".

Step II: **Example -** Provide students with a sample passage as above; **"uses of animals"**. Ask the students to read the passage silently for five minutes. Then discuss the passage, paragraph by paragraph with the students. Show them examples of main idea statement in each paragraph. For example: The main idea of paragraph one is **"Animals are helpful to people in several different ways".** The main idea of paragraph two is **"Animals are helpful in work and transportation"**. The main idea of paragraph three is **"We get other products from animals".** The main idea of the fourth paragraph is **"Animals also help by giving people enjoyment".**

Explain to students that the main idea sentence in each paragraph is a general statement that tells what the entire paragraph is about. All the other sentences in each paragraph are specific details that support the main idea.

Step III: Direct Instruction: Actively teach the students the rules of how to find explicit main ideas and details in texts. Tell students that there are rules for finding the main idea of any paragraph or passage:

Rule 1: Read the first, middle or last sentence of each paragraph.

Rule 2: Ask yourself: Is there a general statement in the paragraph that tells what the entire paragraph is about?

Rule 3: If there is one general statement in the paragraph, that is the main idea.

Rule 4: When the main idea is not stated in these positions, we use the supporting details to infer or guess the main idea. Tell students that the main idea that is not stated in the text is called implied or **"hidden"** main idea.

Step IV: **Teacher - Guided Application:** Provide students with a sample passage. Allow the students read the passage silently for 5 - 10 minutes. Then help and guide them in applying the rules for finding the stated main idea in each paragraph;

PASSAGE 2: IMPORTANCE OF READING AND READING PROBLEMS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The biggest problem facing primary school education in Nigeria today is illiteracy. It is a sad fact that a very high percentage of public primary school children are not learning to read. That is, the public primary school system is failing in its responsibility to develop literacy skills in children. And yet the National Policy on Education (1981) makes it very clear that one basic objectives of primary education is to inculcate in children permanent literacy and the ability to communicate effectively.

The illiteracy problem in our primary schools today should be a serious cause for concern for many reasons. Three of these are outlined here. One, no nation or individual can really advance in our modern society without literacy. Literacy has long been recognized as essential to efficient functioning at an individual level and to scientific and technological growth at a national level.

The second reason why we must banish illiteracy from our primary schools is that children need literacy to succeed in school. Most of the time children who do not do well in school are those who cannot read. And the reason for this is very simple. Most of the activities in school make reading demands on children. For example, children are expected to read textbooks to learn. The homework assignments given to children assume that they can obtain

information from the printed page on their own. All the tests and exams they will take while in school require the ability to read exam questions.

The third reason why we must help children learn to read is that they need good reading ability to cope with the challenges of their everyday living. For example, they may need to read manuals, roads signs, letters from friends and relatives, labels or instructions on medicine bottles. In this and other similar situations, reading becomes a survival skill. The point of emphasis is that the greatest service we, as educators, can do for our children is to help them learn to read.

Source: *Train the Trainer Workshop on Beginning Reading Instruction.*

The teacher discusses the above passage with the students;

Teacher: Who can quickly tell us the rules for finding the main idea?

Yemi: To find the main idea of a paragraph, we read the first, middle or last sentence of each paragraph. We ask ourselves: Is there a general statement in the paragraph?

1) What or who is the paragraph about?

2) What does the author want us to understand about the who?

Teacher: That's very good, Yemi: Now, let's try to apply these rules to find the main idea of each paragraph in this passage.

Teacher: What is the main idea of paragraph one of this passage?

Nanre: The main idea of paragraph one is "The biggest problem facing Primary school education in Nigeria today is illiteracy"

Teacher: Class, do you think Nanre is right?

Ngozi: Yes Sir, she is right.

Teacher: What makes you think so, Ngozi?

Ngozi: Because it is the most general statement in the paragraph.

Teacher: That's interesting. Ngozi is right. Yes, apart from being the general statement, what else can you tell us about this sentence?

Eddy: The sentence also tells us what the entire paragraph is about. It summarizes the whole paragraph and the whole passage. It is therefore, the main idea of the paragraph and the whole passage.

Teacher: That's very good, Eddy. The other sentences in paragraph one are therefore, supporting details. They are specific statements that support the main idea.

Teacher: Now class, let's examine paragraph two of the passage. Ahmed, can you tell us the main idea of the second paragraph?

Ahmed: The main idea of paragraph two is the third sentence of the paragraph.

Teacher: Ahmed, please, read out the sentence.

Ahmed: One, no nation or individual can really advance in our modern society without literacy.

Teacher: Ahmed, can you tell the class why you think your choice is correct?

Ahmed: It is the most general statement in the paragraph.

Teacher: Class, do you agree with Ahmed's choice of the third sentence as the main idea of the paragraph?

Tunde: Yes sir. Sentence three of paragraph two is the main idea of the paragraph because it summarizes the entire paragraph. It tells what the paragraph is about.

Teacher: That's very good, Tunde. You are right.

Step V: **Independent Practice -** Allow the students ample time to practice the skills of finding main idea on their own. Provide students with suitable practice passages to practice the largest skills independently. Provide them with two short passages to practise the skill.

Conclusion*:* Let the students underline main ideas in the remaining paragraphs.

MODEL LESSON 2

(THE TEACHING OF MAIN IDEA USING THE DISCOVERY METHOD)

PASSAGE: IMPORTANCE OF READING AND READING PROBLEMS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The biggest problem facing primary school education in Nigeria today is illiteracy. It is a sad fact that a very high percentage of public primary school children are not learning to read. That is, the public primary school system is failing in its responsibility to develop literacy skills in children. And yet the National Policy on Education (1981) makes it very clear that one basic objectives of primary education is to inculcate in children permanent literacy and the ability to communicate effectively.

The illiteracy problem in our primary schools today should be a serious cause for concern for many reasons. Three of these are

outlined here. One, no nation or individual can really advance in our modern society without literacy. Literacy has long been recognized as essential to efficient functioning at an individual level and to scientific and technological growth at a national level.

The second reason why we must banish illiteracy from our primary schools is that children need literacy to succeed in school. Most of the time children who do not do well in school are those who cannot read. And the reason for this is very simple. Most of the activities in school make reading demands on children. For example, children are expected to read textbooks to learn. The homework assignments given to children assume that they can obtain information from the printed page on their own. All the tests and exams they will take while in school require the ability to read exam questions.

The third reason why we must help children learn to read is that they need good reading ability to cope with the challenges of their everyday living. For example, they may need to read manuals, roads signs, letters from friends and relatives, labels or instructions on medicine bottles. In this and other similar situations, reading becomes a survival skill. The point of emphasis is that the greatest service we, as educators, can do for our children is to help them learn to read.

Subject: Reading Comprehension.

Lesson Topic: Identification of main ideas using text patterns.

Class: S.S. II (Group B) Exp. 1 & 2.

Ability: Average

Sex: Mixed

Date: 12/11/03.

Duration: 1hr 20 min.

Previous Knowledge: It is the first lesson or main idea identification through the use of text organizational pattern.

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

(a) use the enumeration structures to locate the main ideas in paragraphs.

(b) identify the enumeration patterns in short passages.

(c) match signal words with the enumeration structure..

Teaching Aids: A diagram of Text Pattern Signals.

Introduction:

Introduce the lesson by explaining to students that their textbooks contain various text patterns. Tell them that the ability to

identify and use these patterns will enhance their comprehension and retention of important ideas in text materials. Explain that authors use these patterns either to convey their main ideas or to support their main ideas.

Further explain to students that text structures or patterns refer to the way authors organize or arrange their ideas in text materials.

Development/Procedure:

Step I: Introduce the four dominant text patterns. Explain that text patterns can be divided into four (4) types. These are, Enumeration pattern; time Order or Chronological Order pattern; Comparison/Contrast pattern; Cause/Effect pattern.

Step II: Present the directional or signal words for each pattern, thus:

Enumeration pattern: In some textbooks, authors merely list the points that convey the main ideas or support/develop main ideas. In listing their points, authors use such words or phrases as: **to begin with, first, second, third, next, then, finally, most importantly, also, in fact, for example, for instance etc.**

Time Order/Chronological Order: Writers often present events in the order in which they occur. In doing so, they use such words or phrases as **On (date), not long after, now, as before, after, when etc.**

Comparison/Contrast: Authors also present their arguments through comparison and contrast. Comparison means similarity while contrast means dissimilarity or difference. The author may compare a person or thing with another, or a place may be compared with another place. Etc. To do so, the author uses such words/phrases as **however, but, as well as, on the other hand, not only - - - but also, although, unless, yet, similarly, either, while etc.**

Cause/Effect Pattern: The signal words for this pattern include, **“because”, ‘since’, “therefore”, “consequently”, “as a result”, “this led to”, “so that”, nevertheless”, “if”, “accordingly”, “thus”, etc.**

Teacher explains to students that we use these text patterns unconsciously in our everyday life or in every day conversations. Let students generate as many sentences as possible using any of the text patterns.

Step III: Teach the Enumeration pattern using the above passage: Discuss the passage with the students. Guide students to examine each paragraph for signal words. Also help students to identify the appropriate pattern of information.

Teacher: Class, read the passage silently and identify the signal words or phrases for the Enumeration pattern in each paragraph.

Teacher: Lets' begin with paragraph one. Yes, Omolara, can you tell us the signal word(s) for Enumeration pattern in paragraph one?

Omolara: Sir, I have read through paragraph one, but there is no signal word for Enumeration pattern. I can only see a signal word for comparison/contrast pattern.

Teacher: What is the signal word for comparison/Contrast pattern in paragraph one?

Omolara: The signal word is "Yet", line four.

Teacher: Class, is she correct?

Class: Yes sir, Omolara is right. There is no signal word for Enumeration pattern in paragraph one.

Teacher: That's interesting. Now, let's examine paragraph two. Any signal word for Enumeration pattern in paragraph two?

Christy: Yes sir, there is. Look at line two. The signal word is "One". The sentence is, "One, no nation or individual can really advance in our modern society without literacy".

Teacher: And what pattern is that?

Christy: That is the Enumeration pattern, sir.

Teacher: That's very good, Christy. Now, let's move on to paragraph three. What is the signal word for Enumeration pattern in this paragraph?

Dung: The signal word for Enumeration pattern in this paragraph is "second". It starts the first sentence of the paragraph.

Teacher: Class, do you all agree with Dung?

Class: Yes sir. He is very correct.

Teacher: That's good of you, Dung. Chinwe, scan the last paragraph and tell us the signal word that shows the Enumeration pattern.

Chinwe: The signal word is “Third”. It also begins the first sentence of the paragraph.

Teacher: That’s good, Chinwe. But class, is that the only signal word for Enumeration pattern in this paragraph? Examine each sentence carefully. Yes, Gotom, have you found one?

Gotom: Yes sir. Another signal word in this paragraph is “for example”. It is on like two. It is the second sentence.

Teacher: Very good, Gotom.

Step IV: Guide the students to use or follow the signal words for Enumeration pattern in order to identify topic sentences or main idea sentences in each paragraph of the passage under study. Remind students that all signal words point to or show direction of main ideas. They are used to list main points or develop or support the main ideas. Explain to students that if they follow these signal words in their reading, they will be able to locate the author’s main ideas and hence understand what they read.

Teacher: Class, now we are going to follow these signal words in order to locate the author's main points in each paragraph. But note that not all paragraphs contain signal words. Yet, such paragraphs may have topic sentences (sentences that state the main ideas). Let's start with paragraph one again.

Teacher: There is no signal word for Enumeration pattern in paragraph one. But there is a sentence that contains the main idea in paragraph one. Musa, can you identify the main idea sentence in paragraph one?

Musa: Yes sir. It is the first sentence of the paragraph.

Teacher: That's very good, Musa. Class, the first sentence of paragraph one is not only the main idea of paragraph one. It is also the main idea of the entire passage. It is the passage main idea.

Teacher: The signal word in paragraph two is "One". This signal word follows a topic sentence/main idea statement. Who can identify the main idea statement that this signal word points to?

Chalya: The signal word points to the main idea statement, “the illiteracy problem in our primary schools today should be a

serious cause for concern for many reasons”. So, this is the main idea in this paragraph.

Teacher: Excellent, Chalya. The author uses “One” to list his main points, and to show examples of problems of primary schools today. Let’s move to the third paragraph. The signal word in paragraph three is “Second”. Who can use this signal word as a guide or clue to identify the main idea in this paragraph?

Sarnap: The signal word ‘second’ points to the main idea in paragraph three. It conveys the main idea in this paragraph. The author uses this signal word to list the main points of his message. So the first sentence of the paragraph, “the second reason why - - -“ is the main idea of the third paragraph.

Teacher: You are very correct, Sarnap. Your analysis of the paragraph is very good. Now, Hilda, tell us the main idea statement that is signalled by the signal word “Third” in the last paragraph.

Hilda: The signal word “Third” conveys the main idea “The third reason why we must help children learn to read is that they need good reading ability to cope with the challenges of their everyday living”. It is the first sentence of the paragraph.

Teacher: That’s good, Hilda. Class, what about the signal word “for example”. What does it point to? Isaac, tell the class the main idea that the signed word “for example”, points to.

Isaac: It points to the main idea “The third reason why we must help - - -“ it is used to exemplify or illustrate the main idea statement.

Teacher: That’s correct, Isaac. Class, we now know that text patterns are used by authors to convey or exemplify the main ideas in text materials. Readers are sigal words as guides to identify the main ideas in their reading materials.

Conclusion: Have students scan two passages in their English Language textbooks. Have them do the following:

(a) underline signal words for Enumeration pattern.

(b) use these signal words as guides or clues to identify the main ideas of each paragraph of the two passages.

MODEL LESSON 3

(THE TEACHING OF MAIN IDEA SKILLS USING THE DISCOVERY METHOD)

PASSAGE: CONSEQUENCE OF THE CIVIL WAR

The first consequence of the civil war was that inestimable lives and properties were lost. The war reduced the population of the country. Many of those who died in the war did not die in the battle field but were killed by hunger. The properties of Nigerians were equally destroyed during the war with the use of dangerous weapons.

The war also reduced the population of Nigerian soldiers. These soldiers died in the war front while fighting a war they did not cause. Many of the soldiers who died in the war were young and able bodies Nigerian who could have been used for more profitable developmental ventures.

Also, the civil war took the country a lot of money and other materials. The money spent to prosecute the war is yet to be estimated. This money could have been used to develop the country from its present stage of underdevelopment.

Furthermore, the civil war bestowed a lot of hardship on the people of Nigeria. This was as a result of the fact that many people lost their parents and bread winners in the battle field and outside the war front. Also, many people were displaced from their homes, villages and communities during the thirty months civil war.

Another consequence of the civil war was the disruption of education in many parts of the federation. The Eastern part of Nigeria was mostly affected in the disruption. Many institutions of learning were destroyed and others closed down during the thirty months civil war. This caused a serious set - back in the academic pursuit in the country.

The economy was not less affected by the civil war. Economic activities in the country came to a halt as a result of the civil war. Internal and external trade came to a stop in many parts of the country. Many factories and industries stopped production because of the war.

SOURCE: Comprehensive Government for Senior Secondary Schools (SS 1, 2, and 3).

Subject: Reading Comprehension.

Lesson Topic: Identification of main ideas through the use of text patterns or signal words.

Class: S.S. II (Group B) Exp. 1 & 2.

Ability: Average

Sex: Mixed

Duration: 1hr 20 min.

Previous Knowledge: The students have been taught the different types of text patterns which authors use to convey important ideas in text materials.

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

(a) Identify the various text patterns in sample passages.

(b) identify the various signal words in sample passages.

(c) use signal words to identify the most important ideas in the sample passages.

Teaching Aids

Sample passages.

Introduction

Quickly review the previous lesson. Teacher: Class, I told you in the last lesson that we use signal words unconsciously in our daily conversations. I also told you that these signal words are broadly divided into four main groups. Peter, can you tell the class one of the patterns and the words or phrases that go with it?

Peter: One of the patterns is the listing pattern. Some of the words/phrases that go with this pattern are, **'first', "second", "third", "to begin with", "next", "then", "also", "finally" etc.**

Teacher: Very good Peter. Class, I also told you during the last lesson that these words/phrases are called signal words or signposts. This is so because authors use them either to convey or introduce important ideas or support or develop the main ideas in textbooks.

Procedure:

Step I: Have students read the above paragraph silently for about ten minutes.

Step II: Have the students underline all the signal words in each paragraph.

Step III: Discuss the answers with the students. Go over the passage with the students and examine each paragraph for signal words, thus:

Teacher: Timjul, can you tell us the signal word in paragraph one?

Timjul: The signal word in paragraph one is the word "first".

Teacher: Class, do you all agree with Timjul's answer?

Class: Yes, sir.

Teacher: What makes you agree with his answer?

Class: The word “first” is one of the signal words for listing pattern.

Teacher: That’s very good. Now, let’s move on to paragraph two. Femi, what is your answer?

Femi: The signal word in paragraph two is “also”.

Teacher: That’s correct, Femi. But, can you define your answer?

Femi: The word “also” goes with the listing pattern. So, it is a signal word.

Teacher: That’s good. Now, let’s examine paragraph three. Comfort, tell us the signal word in paragraph three.

Comfort: The signal word is “also”

Teacher: Class, is she correct?

Class: Yes, sir.

Teacher: That’s right. Now, let’s look at paragraph four. Yes, Tina, can you tell us the signal word in paragraph four?

Tina: The signal word in this paragraph is “Furthermore.”

Teacher: Class, do you all agree with her answer?

Class: Yes, Sir:

Teacher: That’s good. But, is that the only signal word in this paragraph?

Class: No, Sir.

Teacher: Can someone identify other signal words in paragraph four?

Lara: Yes, Sir. Other signal words in this paragraph are “as a result of” and “also”, in lines two and three, respectively.

Teacher: Class, is Lara correct?

Class: Yes, Sir. She is very correct.

Teacher: That’s very good of you, class. I’m happy that all of you can now identify the various signal words authors use to introduce or support the main ideas in text materials.

Step IV: Guide the students to use or follow the signal words they have identified to locate the most important ideas (main ideas) in each paragraph.

Teacher: Class, let’s now follow these signal words to identify or locate the author’s main points in each paragraph. Yes, the signal word in paragraph one is “first.” Now, Obilom, tell us the main idea of paragraph one that is conveyed by the signal word “first.”

Obilom: The main idea of paragraph one is “the first consequence of the civil war was that inestimable lives and properties were lost.”

Teacher: Class, is Obilom correct?

Class: Yes, Sir.

Teacher: That’s good, Obilom. Now, Fred, what is the main idea of paragraph two?

Fred: The main idea of paragraph two is, “The war also reduced the population of Nigerian soldiers.”

Teacher: Do you all agree with Fred?

Class: Yes, Sir.

Teacher: What makes you agree with Fred’s answer?

Class: The author uses the word “also” to indicate another main point or main idea.

Teacher: That’s very good, class. Now, we have seen that if we follow signal words in reading our text materials, we will be able to locate the author’s main ideas and therefore understand what we read.

Conclusion: Have students identify the main ideas in the remaining paragraphs, using signal words as guides or clues.

MODEL LESSON 4

TEACHING THE MAIN IDEA SKILLS USING THE DIRECT METHOD

PASSAGE: THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN EDUCATION

The role of government in contemporary society is more pervasive and more significant than in a traditional face-to-face community. Government participation in education may range from curriculum design and innovation, provision of equipment, personnel

and funds to supervision and control of men and materials. The Nigerian Government, for instance prepares the educational policy to be followed. The new educational policy in Nigeria, known as "the 6-3-3-4 system", is now the superstructure in Nigeria education.

It is the government that defines the role of parents and other agents of socialisation in education. In Britain, for example, the Education Act provides that: "It shall be the duty of the parents of every child of compulsory school age to cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability, and aptitude either by regular attendance at school or otherwise." The Nigerian Government, by the 1970 Act Education Policy, provides free education for children of primary school age (UPE) which made it mandatory for parents to cause their children, in most cases, to go to school.

Governments also stipulate the curriculum to be followed in schools based on the needs of the country. Thus, the present Nigerian Government places emphasis on science and technological education. Government participation in curriculum design lends credence to the fact that education exists for the interest of the citizens.

Formal education involves a lot of capital and, therefore, the government plays a dominant role in the funding of education. The Nigerian Government, for example, provided books and stationery for

the students. In recent times, the Nigerian Government provides the building, the equipment and machinery for schools, colleges and universities. In a few cases, the government has provided books and stationery for the students. In recent times, the Nigerian Government has embarked on the supply of "Intro-Tech" machines to secondary schools.

Another major area where the influence of the government is felt in education is personnel. It is the government that recruits the right calibre of staff to implement its educational programmes.

SOURCE: Intensive English for Senior Secondary Schools, Book 2, (P. 200-201).

The lesson proceeds as follows:

Procedure:

Step 1: **Introduction:** Introduce the lesson by quickly revising the strategies for finding main ideas in text materials:

Teacher: Paul, could you tell the class what is meant by the term "main idea?"

Paul: Main idea is the most important idea in a text material. A main idea is a general statement that tells what the entire paragraph is about. It helps the reader to understand the writer's basic idea.

Teacher: That's very good of you, Paul. Now, class, what is the difference between the main idea sentence and the other sentences in a paragraph?

Class: The main idea is a general statement that tells what the whole paragraph is about. The other sentences in the paragraph are specific details that support or illustrate the main idea.

Teacher: That's very correct, class. How then do we find main ideas in paragraphs? Yes, Nanya, can you tell us?

Nanya: To find the main idea in a paragraph, we read the first sentence, the middle sentence and the last sentence of each paragraph. Look for the most general statement in each paragraph. If there is a general statement in the paragraph, that is the main idea.

Teacher: That's excellent, Nanya.

Step II: **Example:** Put up the following paragraph on the board. Show students an example of a main idea as a general statement that summarizes the whole paragraph:

"English Language performs several functions in Nigeria. It is the medium of instruction from primary to tertiary levels of education. English is the official language of the country. It is the language of internal and international communication."

Explain to students that the first sentence in the above paragraph is the main idea sentence. It is a general statement that tells what the whole paragraph is about.

Also explain to students that the other sentences in the paragraph are called details. They support or illustrate the main idea.

Step III: **Direct Instruction:** Provide students with a sample passage. “THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN EDUCATION” as above. Discuss the passage with the students. Teach and show them how to locate the main ideas in each paragraph.

Teacher: Class, I want you to read the passage silently for ten (10) minutes. Now, class, let’s apply the techniques of finding main ideas to this passage. We will examine the passage paragraph by paragraph for main idea sentences. Let’s examine each sentence in paragraph one. The main idea sentence or topic sentence in paragraph one is the second sentence: “Government participation in education may range from curriculum design and innovation, provision of equipment, personnel and funds to supervision and control of men and materials.” It is the main idea sentence because it is the general statement that tells what the whole passage is

about. All the other sentences in this paragraph are specific details which develop or support the main idea. I want you to underline the second sentence in paragraph one. Now, let's examine paragraph two for main idea sentence. Class, you will discover that sentence one is the general statement in paragraph two. It is therefore, the main idea sentence in paragraph two. The other sentences in this paragraph are, therefore, supporting details.

Step IV: **Teacher-Guided Application:** The teacher helps and guides the students to identify the main idea sentences in the remaining paragraphs using the techniques they have been taught. Students work independently. The teacher moves around to assist those with difficulty in identifying the main ideas.

Step V: **Independent Practice:** Allow the students to be on their own to practice finding main ideas in textbooks. The students are directed to read a particular passage in their English text books and then underline the main idea sentences in each paragraph.

MODEL LESSON 5

(THE TEACHING OF MAIN IDEA SKILLS USING THE DISCOVERY METHOD)

PASSAGE: THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN EDUCATION

The role of government in contemporary society is more pervasive and more significant than in a traditional face-to-face community. Government participation in education may range from curriculum design and innovation, provision of equipment, personnel and funds to supervision and control of men and materials. The Nigerian Government, for instance prepares the educational policy to be followed. The new educational policy in Nigeria, known as "the 6-3-3-4 system", is now the superstructure in Nigeria education.

It is the government that defines the role of parents and other agents of socialisation in education. In Britain, for example, the Education Act provides that: "It shall be the duty of the parents of every child of compulsory school age to cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability, and aptitude either by regular attendance at school or otherwise." The Nigerian Government, by the 1970 Act Education Policy, provides free education for children of primary school age (UPE) which made it mandatory for parents to cause their children, in most cases, to go to school.

Governments also stipulate the curriculum to be followed in schools based on the needs of the country. Thus, the present Nigerian Government places emphasis on science and technological education. Government participation in curriculum design lends credence to the fact that education exists for the interest of the citizens.

Formal education involves a lot of capital and, therefore, the government plays a dominant role in the funding of education. The Nigerian Government, for example, provided books and stationery for the students. In recent times, the Nigerian Government provides the building, the equipment and machinery for schools, colleges and universities. In a few cases, the government has provided books and stationery for the students. In recent times, the Nigerian Government has embarked on the supply of "Intro-Tech" machines to secondary schools.

Another major area where the influence of the government is felt in education is personnel. It is the government that recruits the right calibre of staff to implement its educational programmes.

SOURCE: Intensive English for Senior Secondary Schools, Book 2, (P. 200-201).

The lesson proceeds thus:

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

a. Identify supporting details in sample passages.

b. Use signal words to locate important ideas in sample passages.

c. Generate oral sentences using signal words.

Teaching Aids: Sample passages.

Introduction: Briefly discuss the passage, “The Role of Government in Education” with the students to activate their prior knowledge. Ask students to mention some of the responsibilities of Government in the development of education in Nigeria.

Procedure:

Step I: Have the students read the passage silently for (10) minutes.

Step II: Guide the students through the passage, one paragraph at a time. In each paragraph, have them underline signal words:

Teacher: Audu, can you tell us the signal word or words in paragraph one?

Audu: The signal word in paragraph one is “for instance,” line five.

Teacher: Class, do you all agree with Audu’s answer?

Class: Yes, Sir.

Teacher: What makes you agree with him?

Class: “For instance” is a signal is a signal word for listing pattern.

Teacher: That’s very good, class. I want you now to underline the signal word “for instance.” Now, let’s examine paragraph two. Yes, Mary, tell us the signal word(s) in the second paragraph.

Mary: The signal word in this paragraph is “for example”, line two.

Teacher: That’s good, Mary. Class, underline the signal word “for example.” Let’s move on to paragraph three. Helen, can you identify the signal word in paragraph three?

Helen: There are two signal words in paragraph three. These are “also” and “thus,” lines one and two respectively.

Teacher: Do you all agree with Helen?

Class: Yes, Sir.

Teacher: That’s correct, class.

Step III: Have students use the signal words as guides or clues to locate the main ideas of each paragraph:

Teacher: Class, we shall now use these signal words to identify the main ideas in each paragraph. Don't forget that signal words either convey main ideas or support the main ideas in text materials. Yes, Dalyop, tell us the main idea sentence in paragraph one.

Dalyop: The main idea sentence in paragraph one is "Government participation in education may range from curriculum design and innovation, provision of equipment, personnel

and funds to supervision and control of men and materials," lines two to line five.

Teacher: Dalyop, can you defend your answer?

Dalyop: Yes, Sir. It is a general statement that tells what the entire paragraph is about. In fact, it is the whole passage main idea, because it summarizes the whole passage.

Teacher: That's excellent, Dalyop. Class, you will see that the signal word "for instance" illustrates the main idea sentence as shown above. Now, paragraph

two. Yemisi, tell us the main idea sentence in paragraph two.

Yemisi: The main idea of paragraph two is “It is the government that defines the role of parents and other agents of socialisation in education,” the first sentence of the paragraph.

Teacher: That’s good, Yemisi. But what signal word helps you to locate the main idea of this paragraph?

Yemisi: The signal word “for example.” Here, it is used to illustrate or exemplify the main idea.

Teacher: That’s correct, Yemisi.

Step IV: Have students underline signal words in the remaining paragraphs. They then use the signal words as guides or clues to identify the main ideas in each paragraph.

Conclusion: Discuss the answers with the students.

APPENDIX Aiii

READABILITY LEVELS OF SELECTED COMPREHENSION PASSAGES FROM S.S. II TEXT MATERIALS

Author(s)	Title of Text	Topic of Passage	Readability Levels	
			Fry Method	Fog Method
Johnson U. Anyaele	Comprehensive Government for Senior Secondary Schools (S.S. 1, 2 & 3).	Consequences of the Civil War.	11th grade	12th grade
Thelma Y. Obah, Emeka J. Otagbumagu, Sam O. and Elsie A. Ogbonna.	Intensive English for Senior Secondary Schools, Book 2.	The Role of Government in Education	11th grade	10th grade
Nasarawa State Primary Education Board (Organizers)	Train the Trainer Workshop on Beginning Reading Institution.	Importance of Reading and Reading Problems in Primary Schools.	11th grade	12th grade
Thelma Y. Obah et al.	Intensive English for Senior Secondary Schools, Book 1.	The Problem with Religion in Nigeria.	11th grade	10th grade
J. F. Baumann	–	Uses of Animals	10th grade	11th grade

APPENDIX Bi

STUDENTS' RAW SCORES FOR PRE-TEST

GROUP A **GROUP B**

EXP 1	CONTROL 1	EXP 1	CONTROL 1
7	2	4	9
4	1	10	0
2	7	0	4
7	0	4	4
10	3	4	5
1	3	6	5
7	7.5	8	6
1	6	5.5	3
1	2.5	5	4
1	6	8	1.5
5	3	0	4.5
1	4	8	10
1	0	7	5
5	6	5	3
3	0	1.5	4
56	51	76	68
Mean: 3.733	**Mean: 3.4**	**Mean: 5.06**	**Mean: 4.53**

APPENDIX Bii

STUDENTS' RAW SCORES FOR POST-TEST

GROUP A

EXP 1	CONTROL 1	EXP 2	CONTROL 2
9	4	0	4
8	5	6	2
6	3	9	0
4	5	10	4
6	3	7	6
7	1	6	8
5	6	7	2
8	3	8	1
8	1	5	6
6	0	5	7
7	4	5	2
4	3	7	4
4	5	6	6
6	2	6	2
8	1	5	4
96	46	92	58
Mean: 6.4	**Mean: 3.06**	**Mean: 6.13**	**Mean: 3.86**

GROUP B

EXP 1	CONTROL 1	EXP 2	CONTROL 2
5	1	3	2
1	1	2	2
0	2	5	2
5	1	8	1
7	0	3	1
2	3	1	2
6	1	6	2
4	2	0	1
4	2	2	2
4	3	0	2
2	2	0	1
4	0	0	2
6	4	0	2
5	3	4	3
2	2	1	1
57	27	34	26
Mean: 3.8	**Mean: 1.8**	**Mean: 2.26**	**Mean: 1.73**