

# **STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AMONGST SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The main objective of the study was to determine the strategies for improving reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The study was carried out using a descriptive survey research design, four research questions and four null hypotheses guided the study. The population for the study was two hundred and fifty (250) English Language teachers selected randomly by balloting from the three education zones (Abakaliki, Onueke and Afikpo Education zone) of Ebonyi State. The instrument used for data collection was a 25 item structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument was structured using a four (4) point rating scale for data collection and was face validated by three experts in Arts and Social Science Department of Ebonyi State University (EBSU) Abakaliki. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability coefficient of the four sections of the instrument which gave a value of 0.93. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions and t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance at the appropriate degree of freedom. The result of the findings revealed that all the items under the use of prediction, taking notes, re-reading and asking (lots of) and responding to questions during reading were accepted as the strategies for improving reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The null hypotheses tested showed no significant difference in the mean response of male and female English language teachers. Based on these findings, some implication were deduced and it was recommended among others that only qualified and competent English language teachers should be recruited. Also, English language teachers should engaged in further professional training/development so as to update their knowledge in the rudiments of reading comprehension.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Reading and comprehension has hitherto come to operate as one concept owing to their synonymous relationship. The utmost aim of reading is comprehension and it does not occur in

the absence of reading so also is reading interesting or meaningful without understanding. Reading therefore makes a full man i.e. a tool for functional literacy. Hence in the words of Azubuike and Obodo (2004) reading is an extraction of meaning from graphic symbols. Similarly, Azikiwe (1998) opines that reading entails understanding by extracting the required information as efficiently as possible from a written material. Reading obviously entails searching for ones thought which lies in the minds of the author(s) and are hidden in the words which lie before the reader. It is an important pre-occupation of students from the lowest level to the highest level of education (with no exception), since there is virtually no aspect of human endeavor that does not require reading. To Akindele (2001)," the world is going through globalization and reading is one of the key players in the move as reading widens the scope of one's horizon, enhances mental capability leading to enhanced performance in all areas of human endeavor". Thus, reading is the badge of intellect and the proof of knowledge and education.

What determines effective reading is good comprehension. Comprehension is an indication that reading took place. It simply means understanding or showing understanding of a reading text which is manifested by the readers' ability to respond correctly to the issues raised in the text in question form. No one ever comprehends what he/she has not read nor does one take delight in reading what one does not understand. The comprehension level therefore is the level of reasoning, meaningful interpretation of both verbal and written symbols. Unit interpretation requires thinking, imagining, analysis and evaluation. Success in comprehension lies in the reader's ability to read and recognize the form and supporting points of an argument, to grasp essential details in a report of a historical event, to recast, using his own sense complex ideas presented in a text or discourse, to understand and interpret scientific observation and make subtle distinction of meaning.

Reading comprehension is an important skill that should be emphasized as it constitutes educational foundation and its acquisition at the early stage of education boosts learning possibilities, enhances the study of other subjects and equips the learner with basics of functional literacy.

Reading comprehension connotes the understanding of what a particular text means and the ideas the author is attempting to convey, both textual and sub-textual, it then requires a brain process

geared towards synthesizing not only the literal words of the piece, but also their relationship with one another, the context behind the words, how subtle language and vocabulary usage can impact emotion and meaning behind the text, and how the text comes together as a larger, coherent whole. Though reading comprehension is a complex and interactive process which requires several different brain functions to work together (and most often requires one to puzzle through multiple layers of context and meaning), it can still be improved upon. It is against this backdrop that the focus of this paper is on finding various strategies for improving reading comprehension.

Reading, hitherto, is indispensable to any formal learning situation. Comprehension is a confirmer that reading took place. To this end, the reader must employ virtually all the reading strategies successfully at the appropriate time. This does not only enhance the speed of comprehension abilities but also triggers his creative and judgmental abilities of the reader. Available studies indicate that students lack the comprehension ability due the absence of effective and efficient utilization of reading strategies which hampers their comprehension of texts/passages and their dismal performance in comprehension examinations. This problem has been observed in senior secondary schools in Ebonyi State which has jeopardized the achievement of the laudable objectives of teaching reading (English language) as L<sub>1</sub>/ESL/EFL in Nigerian secondary schools. The objectives of teaching English are to achieve mutual intelligibility with native speakers as well as to utilize it in writing and communication. The problem could be as a result of many factors which have eluded scholarly attention. Hence, this study is geared towards investigating the factors responsible for this ugly trend and proffering solution.

Contemporarily, becoming functional in today's world is dependent on students being fully skilled in the art of reading comprehension. Researchers have found that teaching reading comprehension strategies is a key element in developing student's reading comprehension skills. Therefore, if efficient and effective reading strategies are developed, students will become more proficient in their use and command of English language. In view of this, it is then pertinent that efforts should be made to ensure the institutionalization of the effective strategies for improving reading comprehension amongst senior secondary schools students in Ebonyi State.

The study therefore tends to:

- a. To find out how the use of prediction improves students' reading comprehension.
- b. To find out whether taking notes during reading improves students' comprehension.
- c. To find out whether re-reading improves students' reading comprehension.

The study focused on the strategies for improving reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The study also focused on the how prediction, re-reading, taking notes and asking questions improve reading comprehension amongst these students.

The study was delimited to state owned secondary schools in Ebonyi state. Four research questions guided the study and they are:

1. How does prediction improve reading comprehension among senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
2. How do note-taking improve reading comprehension among senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
3. How does re-reading improve reading comprehension among senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
4. How do asking (a lots of) and responding to questions during reading improve reading comprehension among senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Equally, four research hypotheses were put forward and tested for the study.

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teachers on how the use of prediction improve reading comprehension among senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teachers on how note-taking improve reading comprehension among senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
3. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teachers on how re-reading improve reading comprehension among senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

4. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teacher on how asking and responding to questions during reading improve reading comprehension among senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

## **1.2. Conceptualization.**

### **Reading.**

Reading is one of the four basic communication skill, others are speaking, listening and writing. It is one's ability to observe writings such as symbols, letters, words, phrases and sentences, persons, pictures signs, characters and works of art and make interpretations and judgments on such things or persons. To Ngwoke (2006), reading entails the recognition and conscious reproduction of written or printed symbols, letters, word, words group and sentences either mentally or vocally by means of eye or finger contact. It can also be seen as one's ability to acquire information by identifying written symbols. Here "eye contact" relates to human without visual impairment while finger contact relates to the blind that make use of the Braille writing.

Going further, reading can equally be defined as a cognitive process that involves decoding symbols to arrive at meaning. Reading is an active process of constructing meaning of words. .

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (6<sup>th</sup> edition) defines "to read" as to look at and understand the meaning of written or printed words or symbols, to go through written or printed words etc silently or aloud.

Reading is a complex channel of communication which involves an interaction between the encoder and decoder (writer and reader). The writer (informant) communicate with the decoder (reader / receiver) who does not see nor know, whose cultural, religious and socio-linguistic background he does not know. On his own part, the decoder / reader is expected to identify and isolate concepts, graphs, logically represented on paper without the usual props to tone or voice recognition, finger or body gestures, facial expressions and the accompaniment of speech contexts.

## **Kinds of Reading**

Ubahakwe (1979), Agbada (2001), Ogbonnaya (2004) identify two major kinds of reading namely

- Vocal reading
- Silent reading

Vocal reading: Ngwoke (2006) says that “vocal reading is the audible realization of the sounds/symbols which constitutes, words, phrases, clauses and sentences of a text or discourse piece”. Different classes of people engage in vocal reading as occasions demand it. Among the classes of people that use it, beginner readers are the most frequent thus children in the nursery and primary schools who need oral drills, for learning to read use it most. Ngwoke (2007).

Silent reading: Ngwoke (2006), Lamidi in Igiligi (2007), asserts that “silent reading involves the inaudible realization of the word the sounds/symbols or ink marks which constitutes the word, phrases clauses, or sentences of a text or discourse piece”. It is the type of reading that makes the reader to read many things without vocalizing it to the hearing of the next person. Silent reading is a good reading habit that ensures faster understanding of the text being read. Silent reading can further be categorized into Intensive or extensive.

The primary purpose of reading is to understand the text. Reading is a thinking process. It gives the reader the opportunity to make use of his/her prior knowledge (what he/she already know).

## **Reading Comprehension.**

Reading comprehension is the ability to process text, understand its meaning and to integrate it with what the reader already knows (William, 2009). Reading comprehension is the level of understanding of a text/message. This understanding comes from the interaction between the words that are written and how they trigger knowledge outside the text / message (Keith, Barbara Charier, Dari, Mark, 2001; Tompkins,2011).

Comprehension is a creative multifaceted process is dependent upon four language skills: phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Richard, Christopher, Cardtine 2009).

Reading comprehension is the act of understanding what you are reading. It is an indication that reading took place. It denotes understanding as well as showing understanding of a reading text which is manifested by the readers' ability to respond correctly to the issues raised in the text in question form. (Ngwoke, 2007). The act of reading and comprehension occurs almost simultaneously. There is no way of separating the two. Thus, in the words of Ngwoke (2006), reading and comprehension are twin sisters bound by a common chain. No one ever comprehends what he/she has not read nor does one take delight in reading what one does not understand or what does not make meaning to one. Reading comprehension is one of the pillars of the act of reading. When one reads a text, he engages in a complex array of cognitive processes. He is simultaneously using his awareness and understanding of phonemes (individual sound pieces "in language) phonics (connection between letters and sounds, the relationship between sounds letters and words) and ability to comprehend or construct meaning from the text. This last component of the act of reading is reading comprehension and of cannot occur independent of the other two elements of the process and is the most difficult and important of all.

### **Reading Comprehension Strategies**

In order to understand a text, the reader must be able to comprehend the vocabulary (diction) used in the piece of writing (i.e. the two element which make up the process of reading comprehension vocabulary knowledge and text knowledge.

Reading comprehension involves some fundamental skills which, consists of knowing meaning of words, ability to understand meaning of a word from discourse context, ability to follow organization of passage and to identify antecedents and references from a passage about its contents, ability to identify the main thought of a passage, ability to answer questions asked in the passage, ability to recognize the literacy devices or proposition and structures used in the passage and determine its tone, to understand the situational mood (agents, objects, temporal and

spatial reference points causal and intentional inflections, etc) conveyed for assertions, questioning, commanding, refraining, etc and finally ability to determine writers purpose, intent and point of view and draw inferences about the writer (discourse – semantics)(Davis ,1994)

An individual's ability to comprehend text is influenced by their skills and their ability to process information. If word recognition is difficult, students then uses two much of their processing capacity to read individual words, which interferes with their ability to comprehend what was read. There exist many and varied strategies of improve reading comprehension and inferences, including improving one's vocabulary, critical text analysis (intersexuality) actual events vs narration of events, etc) and practicing deep reading (Maryanne, 2016). This is to enhance functional literacy which abi-initio is the badge of intellect and the proof of knowledge and education. The ability to comprehend what is read endows one with the basics of living safely and productively and to continue to develop socially, emotionally and most especially, intellectually hence the need to improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State and is hitherto the focus of this study.

Though students may be getting a good grade early in their early start on reading in the elementary classes, but to met the increasing demands of textbooks reading in senior secondary school, they need coaching and support (JAAL 2008). Educators are now aware of the need to improve on the students reading comprehension skills. Content teachers give their students strategies so as to access their reading materials. Some of the strategies are:

- a. **Prediction:** To predict simply denotes to infer information from the clues in the text. Knowing the type of text one is reading (i.e. fiction / non-fiction), understanding the genre of a book boost comprehension. Prediction expects the reader to forecast the content and structure of the text before reading based on titles, subtitles and graphics.

Teachers should assist/help the students with this strategy during instruction.

- b. **Reading with tools notes –taking notes/Annotating text:** Teachers should teach the students the need to read with paper, pen or pencil in hand. This will help them to take notes of things they predict or understand. They can write down questions, create a vocabulary list of all the highlighted words in the chapter along with any unfamiliar terms that they need to define. Taking notes is also helpful in preparing students for later discussions in the class (during instruction).



Annotations in a text, writing in the margins or highlighting is another powerful way to record understanding. This strategy is ideal for comprehension passages. Using sticky notes can allow students to record information from a text without damaging the text. Sticky notes can also be removed and organized later for response to a text (Thought co. 2018). It will equally help in remembering what was read and help to quickly access important section for future reference (education corner 2018).

- c. **Asking (a lots of) Questions:** This is done during reading. Asking questions helps the reader to look for clues in the text. The teacher poses questions to the students during the reading process because such questions can be effective as they:
- Give students a purpose for reading.
  - Focusing students' attention on what they are to learn helps students to think actively as they read.
  - Encourage students to monitor their comprehension.
  - Help students to review content and relate what they have learned to what they already know.

The Question Answer Relationship strategy (QAR) encourages students to learn how to answer questions better

Asking questions is also good way to make sure one understands what he\she is reading. Asking questions like, 'what's happening now?', or , ' who is speaking here?; can help keep one focused. Also, questions like 'why did he do that?', 'what is he thinking now?' can also help one think deeper into the story and remain focused. Supporting Wasserman (1987) opines that thinking operations can be incorporated into the reading curriculum in three main ways so as to enhance comprehension amongst students during reading. They are

- a. the activities we give students,
  - b. the questions we ask,
  - c. the responses or reactions we give to the students' answer.
- d. **Re-reading (or skimming) previous sections of the text:** It is often helpful to glance backwards through a piece of text (or even re-read large sections) to remember information needed or have forgotten (what happened previously, what a particular word means, who a person was etc).

Previous sentences, sections or even whole chapter can provide helpful context clues. Re-reading the previous section(s) of a passage helps to refresh ones memory so that a better understanding and interpretation of later sections of the text can be achieved.

- e. **Use of Graphic and Semantic Organizer:** Graphic organizers illustrate concepts and relationship between concepts in a text by using diagrams. Graphic organizers are known by different names, as maps, webs, graphs, charts, frames or clusters. Regardless of the label, graphic organizer can help readers focus on concepts and how they are related to other concepts. Graphic organizers help students read and understand textbooks and picture books, helps them to focus on text structure (differences between fiction and non-fiction), provide them with tools they can use to examine and show relationship in a text and also help them, to write well organized summaries of a text.
- f. **Summarizing:** Summarizing requires students to determine what is important in what they are reading and put it into their own words. Instruction in summarizing helps students to:
  - ❖ Identify or generate main ideas
  - ❖ Connect the main or central ideas
  - ❖ Eliminate unnecessary information
  - ❖ Remember what they read.

### **Factors Affecting Reading Comprehension.**

There are a lot of factors that militate against reading comprehension. Some of these factors include:

- a. **Reader and text factors:** When a reader reads, he/she is actively engaged with the text and as such think about many things as they read to comprehend the text. For instance they activate prior knowledge, examine the text to uncover its organization, make predictions, create mental images, draw inference, notice symbols and other literacy devices, monitor their understanding etc. These activities according to National reading Panel (2000) can be categorized as reader and text factors. Reader factors include the background knowledge that readers bring to the reading process as well as the strategies they use while reading and their

motivation and engagement during reading. Text factors include authors' ideas, the words the author uses to express those ideas and how the ideas are organized and presented. Both reader factors and text factors affect comprehension.

- b. **Poorly developed language skills and strategies among readers:** Readers with poorly developed language skills will not have the tools to take advantage of the obvious structures and comprehension cues that are part of considerate text nor will they have the extra tools needed to overcome the barriers of inconsiderate text. This is because they lack the locus of understanding.
- c. **Poor reading environment:** This equally constitutes serious threat to reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Nigeria. Sometimes, it is not just that the classrooms are poor, rather there is often a total absence of it. There is increased level of poverty in many homes, presence of strife, communal clashes, terrorist invasion, government negligence on education e.t.c students study in unhealthy environment especially students in Internally Displaced(Persons)Camps, (IDP camps).

Equally, most Nigerian families do not live in descent homes. It is often common to get a family of six, seven and above putting up in a 10ft x 12ft wide room having no study facility at all (Ngwoke 2007). Any available space at the corridor is taken over by luggage that could not be accommodated in the room. Such rooms are stuffy and noisy and therefore discourage concentration. Effective reading comprehension is done in a well ventilated, well-illuminated and noiseless place and how can this be done when most school does not have neither reading nor writing desks. From primary to the tertiary institutions, the problems of poor reading facilities are glaring. The issue of pupils using the bare floor as their desks is still trending (most of these floors are not even cemented). The use of felled tree trunks as seats/desks still exists (Ngwoke 2017, Etuk 2005). This kind of reading/ study arraignment discourages in its entirety reading and comprehension

**d. Poor curriculum planning system by the government:** At other times, the problem is due to the poor planning of the school curriculum which does not give room for the teaching of some fundamental reading comprehension concepts (Ngwoke, 2017, William 2017). For effective reading comprehension to be cultivated in the students, a solid foundation should be laid from the cradle.

**e. Lack of appropriate reading text:** Another factor that hampers reading comprehension is the absence of the appropriate recommended text. Often times, it is either that the presented texts are far above the age of the reader, or there is no prescribed texts for the students (Ngwoke 2017) or that the students do not have the prescribed texts (Etuk 2005). Most Nigeria parents are so poor that they can hardly afford the texts their children/ wards need in school. How then does one comprehend what he/she has not read.

### **Theoretical Framework of the Study**

Theoretical framework of the study was based on Bruner theory of learning (constructivism) and pedagogy (the science of education).

Learning theories are conceptual frameworks that describe how students absorb, process and retain knowledge during learning (Simandan, 2013). Cognitive, emotional, and-environmental influences as well as prior experience, all play a part in how understanding (or a world view) is acquired or changed and knowledge and skills retained.(Illeris 2004; Ormrod 2012).

Jerome Bruner (1915–2016) and others as Jean Piaget (1936-1950), John Dewy (1859–1952), George Kelly (1905-1967), Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) etc were the proponents of constructivism. He (and his advocates) believe that a learner’s ability to learn relies largely on what they already know and understand and the acquisition of knowledge should be an individually tailored process of construction. To Bruner, a learner (even of a very young age) is capable of learning any material so long as the instruction is organized. It informs teacher actions, judgments, and teaching strategies by taking into consideration theories of learning, understanding of students’ needs, and the background interests of individual student (Shulman, 1987).

These theories are related to the study because in teaching students the strategies to improve their comprehension in reading, it involves instruction and it appeals to the cognitive domain of the students.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Descriptive survey design according to Nworgu (2006) is the one in which a group of people is studied by collecting and analyzing data from few people, considered to be representative of the entire group. The author further stated that questionnaire, text or interview could be used to collect data in survey design. The design was considered appropriate for this study because questionnaire was used to obtain data from teachers employed in senior secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

The population of the study comprises all the English language teachers in the 222 state owned senior secondary schools in the state. This comprised of 112 female and 138 male English Language of teachers totally 250. (Secondary Education Board SEB 2020).

The state has three education zones. They are Abakaliki, Onueke and Afikpo education zones. From Abakaliki and Onueke education zone, eight (8) senior secondary schools were randomly selected where ten (10) English language teachers were selected by simple balloting. Then, in Afikpo education zone, ninety (90) senior secondary school was also selected randomly were ten (10) English language teachers were selected by balloting (Afikpo education zone has more schools than the other two zones) This number totaled two hundred and fifty (250) English Language teachers comprised of 112 males and 138 females.

### **Area of Study**

The study was carried out in 222 state owned senior secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. There are 11 recognized Local Government Areas in the state. These include Ikwo, Ebonyi, Abakaliki, Afikpo North, Afikpo South, Ohaukwu, Ishielu, Onicha, Ivo, Ezza South and Ezza North Local Government Areas respectively. The state is bound Enugu, Cross River, Abia, Benue State respectively. The state is richly blessed with huge vegetation which triggers business transactions between people from different parts of the country. The research was conducted in Ebonyi state because they are multi-linguals. They are also farmers and few traders producing rice, yam, cassava, groundnuts and so on in large quantities. They have festivals like mmanwu, new yam festivals and others. The state was chosen for the study due to the researcher's

observation of their poor performance in reading comprehension in English language during examinations.

Instrument for data collection was a 25 item researcher – developed questionnaire called Strategies for Improving Reading Comprehension (SIRC) was structured to elicit response from the teachers. The questionnaire items were generated based on the information gathered from the review of related literature.

The questionnaire was made up of two parts; part 1 solicited for information on the personal data of the respondents while part 2 was structured for teachers. Each questionnaire item is assigned a four-point scale of strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with corresponding values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

The instrument was validated by three experts, two in English language Education and one expert in measurement valuation of Ebonyi State University (EBSU) Abakaliki. Their respective suggestions were incorporated in the production of the final questionnaire.

The reliability of the instrument was obtained by trial testing the questionnaire in another environment. The instrument was trial tested using thirty (30) English language teachers in twelve (12) public secondary schools in Enugu State. The reason is because Ebonyi and Enugu State have the same educational policies and programs.

Their responses were collected and used to determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument using Cronbach Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) because the reliability indices are based on distress. Cluster 1 (0.77), cluster 2 (0.83), cluster 3 (0.70) and cluster 4 (0.68). However, the 25 items gave a reliability coefficient of 0.93 showing a very high internal consistency which also shows that the instrument was reliable.

However, three research assistants that are English language teachers in the state were used for the study. They are graduates of English language. They were trained in the distribution and collection of the questionnaire to and from the respondents. Two hundred and fifty (250) copies of the questionnaire were administered and subsequently retrieved thereby giving a return rate of 100%.

Data collected were analyzed using weighted mean and standard deviation to answer the four research questions while t-test will be used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significant.

For decision to be taken, the real limit of number will be used thus:

- 3.5 – 4.00 Strongly Agree (SA)
- 2.50 – 3.49 Agree (A)
- 1.50 – 2.49 Disagree (D)
- 1.00 – 1.49 Strongly Disagree (SD)

For the hypotheses, if the calculated t-value is equal or greater than the critical value, it will be rejected, otherwise do not reject.

## Data presentation and Analysis

### Research question 1

**How do the use of prediction improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria?**

**Table 1:** Men responses of teachers of English language on the use of prediction in improving reading comprehension amongst senior secondary students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria

N = 250

S/N	Use of prediction in improving reading comprehension	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN $\bar{X}$	SD	DECISION
1	Forecasting the content and structure of a	111	73	33	33	3.04	1.05	Accepted

	text before reading.							
2	Use of graphic organizers.	102	96	42	10	3.16	0.84	Accepted
3	Use of picture walk.	54	81	60	55	2.56	1.06	Accepted
4	Utilization of clues.	124	70	28	28	3.16	1.01	Accepted
5	Use of evidence from the text.	45	40	65	100	2.12	1.12	Not Accepted
6	Recognition of district patterns / outline.	96	80	39	35	2.94	1.05	Accepted
7	Utilization of information from the text	118	46	32	54	2.91	1.20	Accepted
	<b>GRAND MEAN</b>						<b>2.83</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

The result in table 1 showed that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 were accepted because they have mean values above 2.50, while item 5 was not accepted because its mean value was less than 250. However, the grand mean has a mean value of 2.83, showing that the use of prediction improves reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students.

## Research question 2

How do note-taking improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Onueke Education zone of Ebonyi State, Nigeria?

**Table 2.** Mean responses of teachers of English language in how note taking improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

N = 250

S/N	Use of note taking a improving reading comprehension	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN —X	SD	DECISION
8	Increase students attention and interest.	100	51	53	46	2.82	1.15	Accepted
9	Helps them recall necessary details.	99	83	48	20	3.04	.954	Accepted
10	Helps them organize their ideas and	117	75	38	20	3.15	.939	Accepted



	information from the text.							
11	Help them keep records of what was read for easy accessibility in the future.	109	70	28	43	2.98	1.14	Accepted
12	Helps them to summarize texts in their words.	75	79	51	45	2.73	1.07	Accepted
13	Helps them to always focus on the main idea / concepts.	77	62	79	32	2.73	1.03	Accepted
14	Helps them to make use of annotation while reading	86	79	51	34	2.86	1.03	Accepted
15	It promotes active learning and prioritizing skills.	60	97	66	27	2.76	.939	Accepted
	<b>GRAND MEAN</b>					<b>2.88</b>		<b>Accepted</b>

The result in table 2 showed that items 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 were accepted because they have mean value of 2.50, however the grand mean value is 2.88, meaning that note taking improves reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students.

### Research question 3

How do re-reading improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria?

**Table 3:** Mean responses of teachers of English language on how re-reading improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria

N=250.

S/N	How re-reading improves reading comprehension	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN — <b>X</b>	SD	DECISION
16	Helps deepen understanding during reading.	133	43	39	35	3.09	1.11	Accepted
17	Making reading comforting and	85	73	47	45	2.79	1.10	Accepted

	enjoyable.							
18	Helps students understand how language and reading works.	143	36	45	26	3.18	1.06	Accepted
19	It supports student's confidence and fluency.	62	60	40	88	2.38	1.20	Not Accepted
20	It builds comprehension skills.	123	49	41	37	3.03	1.11	Accepted
	<b>Grand mean</b>					<b>2.89</b>		<b>Accepted</b>

The result in table 3 shows that items 16, 17, 18 and 20 were accepted because they have mean values above 2.50, while item 19 was not accepted because its mean value was less than 2.50. However, the grand mean has a mean value of 2.89 meaning that note taking helps greatly in improving reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students.

#### Research question 4

How do asking and responding to questions improve reading comprehension among senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria?

Table 4: Mean responses of teachers of English language reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

N = 250

S/N		SA	A	D	S D	MEAN _X	SD	DECISION
21	Helps students clarify and comprehend what they are reading.	113	40	57	49	2.90	1.14	Accepted
22	Engages their interest, promotes comprehension and gives them a reason	80	54	70	46	2.67	1.11	Accepted

	to read.								
23	Helps students critically reflect on what they have read.	187	17	30	16	3.50	.937	Accepted	
24	Helps students engage with the text.	87	63	44	56	2.72	1.16	Not Accepted	
25	Helps students monitor their own comprehension while reading.	146	24	48	32	3.13	1.12	Accepted	
	<b>Grand mean</b>					<b>2.98</b>		<b>Accepted</b>	

The result in table 4 showed that items 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 were accepted because they have mean value above 2.50. The grand mean value is 2.98 which shows that asking a lot of question as well as responding to questions improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

### Hypothesis 1

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teachers on how the use of prediction improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

**Table 5:** T-test result on the use of prediction in improving reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students

S/NO	VARIABLES	NO	X	SD	DF	T-CAL	T-CRI	DECISION	SIGNIFICANT
1.	M	112	2.33	0.78	248	4.07	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.51	1.17					
2.	M	112	3.18	0.71	248	0.46	1.960	Accept Ho	Not significant
	F	138	3.13	0.93					
3.	M	112	3.36	0.92	248	7.40	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.79	0.98					
4.	M	112	1.56	0.81	248	2.73	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.57	1.01					
5.	M	112	2.78	1.01	248	7.86	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant

	F	138	3.12	1.09					
6.	M	112	2.73	1.09	248	2.98	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	3.12	0.98					
7.	M	112	2.50	1.11	248	4.14	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	3.18	1.21					
						<b>4.26</b>	<b>1.960</b>		

The result in table 5 showed that t-cal value of 4.26 is greater than the t-crit value of 1.960. Hence Ho is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teachers on how the use of prediction improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students.

## Hypothesis 2

Ho: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teachers on how note taking improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

**Table 6:** T-test result on how note-taking improves reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students?

S/no	Variables	NO	X	SD	DF	T-cal	T-crit	Decision	Significant
8.	M	112	3.25	0.86	248	5.56	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.47	1.23					
9.	M	112	2.94	0.93	248	1.46	1.960	Accept Ho	Not significant
	F	138	3.12	0.96					
10.	M	112	3.29	0.87	248	2.07	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	3.04	1.01					
11.	M	112	2.23	0.93	248	3.29	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.77	1.20					
12.	M	112	3.01	1.02	248	4.62	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.46	1.04					

13.	M	112	3.39	0.96	248	4.96	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	3.01	1.01					
14.	M	112	3.16	1.01	248	4.28	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.62	0.99					
15.	M	112	2.68	0.90	248	1.10	1.960	Accept Ho	Not Significant
	F	138	2.8`	0.98					
						<b>3.42</b>	<b>1.960</b>		

The result in table 6 shows that the t-test value of 3.42 is greater than the t-critical value of 1.960. Hence  $H_{02}$  is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teachers on how note-taking improves reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students.

### Hypothesis 3

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teachers on how re-reading improves reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

**Table 7:** T-test result on how re-reading improves reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students

S/no	Variables	NO	X	SD	DF	T-cal	T-critical	Decision	Significant
16.	M	112	2.39	1.12	248	3.77	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.86	1.05					
17.	M	112	3.05	1.08	248	3.46	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.57	1.06					
18.	M	112	3.18	1.12	248	2.70	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	3.02	0.99					
19.	M	112	2.77	1.12	248	4.87	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.06	1.16					

20.	M	112	2.85	1.08	248	2.24	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	3.17	1.12					
						<b>3.41</b>			

The result in table 7 shows that the t-test value of 3.41 is greater than the t-crit value of 1.960. Hence  $H_{03}$  is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English teachers on how re-reading improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students.

#### Hypothesis 4

**H<sub>04</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teachers on how asking (a lot of questions) and responding to questions during reading improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

**Table 8:** t-test result on how asking (a lot of questions) and responding to questions during reading improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students.

S/no	Variables	NO	X	SD	DF	T-cal	T-cri	Decision	Significant
21.	M	112	3/09	1.10	248	2.44	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.74	1.15					
22.	M	112	3.16	0.98	248	6.82	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.27	1.05					
23.	M	112	3.75	0.71	248	4.06	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	3.28	1.04					
24.	M	112	3.06	1.03	248	4.29	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	2.44	1.19					
25.	M	112	2.43	1.14	248	10.22	1.960	Reject Ho	Significant
	F	138	3.63	0.75					
						<b>5.56</b>			

The result in table 8 showed that the t-test value of 5.56 is greater than the t-crit value of 1.960, hence  $H_{04}$  is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teachers in how asking (a lot of questions) and responding to questions during reading improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students.

The major findings from the result of data analyzed were summarized as follows:

1. The determiners / variables of prediction as an enhancer in senior secondary school students' comprehension during reading are really imprecise for students to perform optimally in the classroom and also in internal and external examinations in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The identified elements are the use of graphic organizers, picture walk, utilization of clues, use of evidence from the text, recognition of district patterns / outline, utilization of information from the text and forecasting the content and structure of a text before reading.
2. Taking notes while reading improves comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The listed determiner includes that note-taking helps increase students' attention and interest, helps students recall necessary details, helps them organize their ideas and information from the text, helps students keep records of what was read for easy accessibility in the future, helps students to summarize texts in their own words, helps students to always focus on the main ideas / concepts, helps them to make use of annotation while reading and also helps to promote active learning and prioritize skills.
3. Equally, re-reading maximizes reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Re-reading helps deepen students' understanding during reading, makes reading comfortable and enjoyable for students, helps students to understand how reading and language works, enhances their fluency in reading building stronger comprehension skills.
4. Asking (a lot of questions) and responding to questions also helps in maximizing reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. There were opinionated to be high by the respondents. Asking (a lot of) and responding to questions provides / helps students clarify and comprehend what they are reading, engages students' interest, promotes understanding and gives them reason to read. It also helps students to

critically reflect on what they've read while engaging with the text and equally helps students to monitor their own comprehension while reading.

5. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teachers on how the use of prediction improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
6. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teachers on how note-taking improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
7. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teachers on how re-reading improves reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
8. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teachers on how asking (a lot of questions) and responding to questions during reading improves reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The use of prediction improves reading amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi state. Responses from items used in assessing the research question gave a grand mean of 2.83 substantiating prediction as one of the reading strategies that help senior secondary school students. Prediction which can take the form of forecasting the content and structure of a text before reading, deducting information from the clues in the text, use of graphic organizers, picture walk, recognition of district patterns / outline during reading triggers students' interest and utmost comprehension. This links up with the importance of critical thinking in student's reading success. Critical thinking denotes reasoning – that is the highest order of mental functioning or the intellectual skills which one brings into text reading. This kind of reading involves the use of logic, experience and world knowledge to arrive at meanings which may not be immediately obvious in the text. This equally substantiates the opinion of Thorndike (1971), where he argues that of better readers are desired, the challenge would be to develop ways of teaching students to think while reading.



The null hypothesis tested on how the use of prediction improves reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The result showed that the t-cal value of 4.26 which is greater than the t-crit. value of 1.960. Therefore the null hypothesis  $H_{01}$  is rejected meaning that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teachers on how the use of prediction improves reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Findings on how note taking improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Responses from the items used to assess this research question gave a grand mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) value of 2.88 which means that note-taking improves reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Responses indicate that taking notes, annotating texts, writing in the margins, highlighting new vocabularies and reading with tools to a large extent improve students' comprehension during reading. Taking notes equally prepares students for later discussions during classroom instruction.

The null hypothesis tested on how note-taking improves reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The result showed that the t-cal value of 3.42 which is greater than the t-crit value of 1.960. Therefore, the null hypothesis  $h_{02}$  is rejected meaning that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teachers on how note taking improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Equally re-reading improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Assessment of research question 3 gave a grand mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) value of 2.89 which means that secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria utilize re-reading as one of the strategies that improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary schools.

Re-reading which entails glancing backwards through a piece of text to remember information needed or information that has been forgotten greatly improves reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students. Data obtained indicates that re-reading not only deepens students' understanding during reading but it also makes reading comfortable and enjoyable for

students, helping them juxtapose language and reading, enhancing fluency in reading and most especially it builds stronger comprehension skills.

The null hypothesis tested on how re-reading improves reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The result showed that the t-cal value of 3.41 is greater than the rejected meaning that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teachers on how re-reading improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Findings on how asking (a lot of questions) and responding to questions improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Assessment of the responses from this research question gave a grand mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) value of 2.98 which means that asking (lots of) and responding to questions improves reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. They were opinionated to be high by the respondents. Asking (a lot of) and responding to questions provides / helps students clarify and comprehend what they are reading, engages their interest more, promotes understanding and gives them reason to read. It also helps the students to critically reflect on what they've read while engaging with the text while assisting them in monitoring their own understanding. This supports the findings of Wasserman (1987) that thinking operation can be incorporated into the reading curriculum in three main ways so as to enhance comprehension amongst students during reading. They are the activities we give the students; (2) the questions we ask and the responses or reactions we give to the students' answers. This can only be actualized when the question answer relationship strategy is brought to the limelight during reading amongst the students.

The null hypothesis tested on how asking (lots of) question and responding to questions improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The result showed that the t-cal value of 5.56 is greater than the t-crit. value of 1.960. Therefore, the null hypothesis  $H_{04}$  is rejected meaning that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female English language teachers on how asking (lots of) and responding to questions improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

## **Conclusion**

The findings reveals that students who utilize these reading strategies – taking notes, asking (lots of questions) and responding to questions, re-reading and making use of prediction during reading are better placed in reading comprehension. Great ones are those who read and reading make a man says an adage. Thus reading is the badge of intellect and the proof of knowledge and education. There cannot be a complete proof of reading without comprehension. This comprehension comes when the necessary pedagogical strategies have been inculcated into the students and necessary skills imbibed so that students will perform optimally. All the rudiments / strategies that led to utmost comprehension by the students in any given reading exercise should be the focus of the teacher during of classroom instruction.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Only qualified and competent English language teachers should be recruited.
2. English language teachers should engage in professional development so as to update their knowledge in the rudiments of reading comprehension knowing that reading is a sophisticated area that cannot be handled by those who are not aware of what it is.
3. The school libraries should be provided with English language texts (e-books) from different genres.
4. More time should be created in the school time-table to allow for effective and efficient reading comprehension lessons.

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## APPENDIX 1

### QUESTIONNAIRE

**Research question 1:** How does the use of prediction improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary students in Onueke Education zone of Ebonyi State, Nigeria?

S/N		SA	A	D	SD
1	Forecasting the content and structure of a text before reading.				
2	Use of graphic organizers.				
3	Use of picture walk.				
4	Utilization of clues.				
5	Use of evidence from the text.				
6	Recognition of district patterns / outline.				
7	Utilization information from the text for anticipated.				

**Research question 2:** How does note-taking improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Onueke Education zone of Ebonyi State, Nigeria?

S/N		SA	A	D	SD
1	Increase students attention and interest.				
2	Helps them recall necessary details.				
3	Helps them organize their ideas and information from the text.				
4	Help them keep records of what was read for easy accessibility in the future.				
5	Helps them to summarize texts in their words.				
6	Helps them to always focus on the main idea / concepts.				
7	Helps them to make use of annotation while reading				

8	It promotes active learning and prioritizing skills.				
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**Research question 3:** How does re-reading improve reading comprehension amongst senior secondary school students in Onueke Education zone of Ebonyi State, Nigeria?

S/N		SA	A	D	SD
1	Helps deepen understanding during reading.				
2	Making reading comforting and enjoyable.				
3	Helps students understand how language and reading works.				
4	It supports student's confidence and fluency.				
5	It builds comprehension skills.				

**Research question 4:** How does asking and responding to questions improve reading comprehension among senior secondary school students in Onueke Education zone of Ebonyi State, Nigeria?

S/N		SA	A	D	SD
1	Helps students clarify and comprehend what they are reading.				
2	Engages their interest, promotes comprehension and gives them a reason to read.				
3	Helps students critically reflect on what they have read.				
4	Helps students engage with the text.				
5	Helps students monitor their own comprehension while reading.				

