# IRI Program: Its Effect on Reading Attitude of Low Performing Freshmen Education Students

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# Abstract

How to improve reading attitude of today's learners is still a puzzle to many educators, especially in the tertiary level where many reading materials are assigned to students. Using experimental design, particularly the one-group pretest-posttest design, this study aimed to find out if there is a significant difference in the reading attitude level of the 37 low performing freshmen education students before and after an Intertextual Reading Intervention (IRI) program in one university in the Philippines. The IRI program consisted of five modules which utilized intertextual strategies and intertextual materials, was conducted for one semester. Specifically, Adolescent Reading Attitudes Survey (ARAS) was administered. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (t-test) were computed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Results showed that the posttest means were all significantly higher than the pretest means beyond the .01 level of significance. The research study demonstrates that the IRI program could improve the learners' reading attitude. This finding has a number of important implications for future practice, like for instance, the use of intertextual strategies and materials are crucial in the conduct of an IRI program. The study also provides support for the practice of using multiple texts than using a single textbook to teach the entire duration of a course work. Further, reading survey could be conducted before the start of the IRI program, in order to have a baseline data on what genres and types of reading materials, topics, and activities students like to read and participate.

Keywords: reading attitude, intertextual strategies, IRI program, experimental design

# **1.0. Introduction**

A person's attitude is definitely at the core of everyone's success in any endeavor (Maxwell, 2004). Having a positive attitude or disposition is one of the key dimensions in successful learning (Coiro, 2012). Specifically, attitude characterizes how learners feel about an undertaking or activity (i.e., reading) which are manifested in their behaviors in performing this task (Vehovec, Zubkovićet, & Reinić, 2014). Some scholars like McKenna, Conradi, Lawrence, Jang, and Meyer (2012) defined reading attitudes "as acquired predispositions to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to aspects of reading" (p. 285). They identified three factors affecting attitude acquisition: direct experiences with the object (i.e., entities like people, group, places, etc., or behaviors like eating fruits, reading, and others); beliefs about the object; social

norms as pertains to the object and the individual's agency to conform to these norms. In a seminal work of Alexander and Filler (1976), they defined reading attitude as "a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation" (p.1). McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) supported this notion emphasizing that reading attitude prompts a student to like or dislike reading which may influence his/her reading ability. Some scholars like Day and Bamford (1998) developed an expectancy-value model which explains the nature of motivation for extensive reading; and based on this model, there are four factors affecting L2 reading motivation, and one of them is attitude (cited in Kim, 2011). The other factors are the following: reading materials, ability, and classroom environment. However, among these four factors, Day and Bamford claimed that reading materials that are suited to a group of students and their attitudes have bigger impact in motivating students than the other two factors. In addition, learners who have positive attitude are usually considered better readers for they allocate ample time in reading (Gambrell, et al., 1996). And thus they are more willing and interested to read (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). Several studies fostered a positive relationship between learner's ability (i.e., fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, etc.) and reading attitude (Sperling & Head, 2002; Hargrave & Senechal, 2000; Chow & Mcbride-Chang, 2003). Moreover, reading attitude is associated with learner's persistence and success in reading (Woolley, 2011).

In the study of McKenna and colleagues (2012) in which they developed a self-report survey for measuring adolescents' attitude toward reading, they found that attitudes are dynamic and presumed to vary vis-à-vis the goals of literacy endeavors (i.e., in-school literacy as compared to out-of-school literacy) and its medium (i.e., print vs. digital). They also indicated that assessing student's reading attitude might provide key information in knowing students' reading comprehension and reading difficulties, especially among adolescent readers. Learners with positive attitude toward reading are confident in their capacity to tackle complicated texts (Coiro, 2012), especially high school and tertiary students who are exposed to these kind of reading materials. However, Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) argued that a student, who is extrinsically motivated to read for a specific reason (i.e., improving his/her grades, peers or parents' recognition) may show good reading ability or performance but has negative attitude towards reading.

### 1.1. Instructional strategies to enhance reading attitude

Mckenna and Stahl (2009) suggested different instructional techniques to improve positive reading attitude, i.e., giving students time for recreational reading like *Self-Selected Reading (SRR)*. However, teachers should be good models and share what they read with students and then, encourage them to do the same. They also suggested *Cross-Age Tutoring* (placing together older and younger students or low and high performing ones in a reading activity), *Literature Circles* (students interact with other members about materials they've read, mostly fiction), and *Idea Circle* (makes use of nonfiction for discussion).

Other researchers and educators recommend using *Systematic Reinforcement* like providing feedback and timely praise (Conley, 2008; Joseph, 2004; Zentall & Lee, 2012). They also stressed using variety of materials which match students' interest, determined through interviews and surveys mentioned previously (Conley, 2008). Furthermore, there are reading resources proven to positively affect the reading attitude of learners. For example, in the work of Chen et al. (2013), they found that reading e-books could enhance the reading attitude of the EFL tertiary students. This is supported in the study of Conradi, Jang, Bryant, Craft, and McKenna (2013) in which they showed that digital media is one of the factors that affect reading attitude positively. Other researchers found the use of movies (Detmering, 2010; Turnau, 2004; Vetrie, 2004; Williams,

2007), graphic novels (Chun, 2009), and anime (Allen & Ingulsrud, 2003; Fukunaga, 2006) or comic books like Manga series (Wilson & Kelly, 2010) to be beneficial as well.

However, very little is known on how the concept of intertextuality or intertextual strategies and approaches affect the reading attitude of learners.

# 1.2. Perennial problem

Majority of students today have a negative attitude towards reading, and fostering reading as an enjoyable activity is crucial. Many researchers identified reading attitude as one of the motivational constructs that affect reading motivation (Chow & McBride-Chang, 2003; Kim, 2011; McKenna et al., 2012; Woolley, 2011) and achievement (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995; Petscher, 2010); on the other hand, extensive research has also shown that reading attitude of learners had degenerated over time, specifically, as students move to school and reach high school and tertiary levels (e.g., McKenna et al., 1995). It is, indeed, one of the main problems teachers face in educating students (Edmunds & Tancock, 2003; Pitcher et al., 2007; Uygulamada & Bilimleri, 2011; Wigfield et al., 2004), especially Filipino college learners. Many adolescents characterized themselves as "resistant readers" (Conradi, Jang, Bryant, Craft, & McKenna, 2013, p. 567). In fact, there are some students who know how to read, but choose not to read (Pitcher et al., 2007).

Thus, how to improve reading attitude of today's learners is still a puzzle to many educators (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995; OECD, 2010; Sainsbury & Schagen, 2004). Conradi and colleagues (2013) stressed that if our main goal as teachers is to develop a lifelong habit of reading on our students then we have to develop their positive attitude towards reading. Further, it is significant to note that only few research studies had been conducted in high school and tertiary levels about reading attitude or studies relative to affective domain (McKenna, Conradi, Lawrence, Jang, & Meyer, 2012), especially to struggling learners.

# 2.0. Methodology

The study utilized the *one-group pretest-posttest design* (Bernard, 2013). Random sampling technique was used, specifically fish bowl method (Creswell, 2012), in selecting the 37 freshmen education students as participants of the study in one university in the Philippines. They were chosen from among the 112 low performing students, whose scores in the College Admission Test were 75% and below.

# 2.1. The purpose of the study

The research study focused on the use of Intertextual Reading Intervention (IRI) program, which utilized intertextual materials (i.e., picture books, movies, digital media, etc.), different intertextual strategies (i.e., conflicting texts arrangement), and intertextual questions; and how this program affected the reading attitude of the first year pre-service teacher education students. Specifically, it answered the question: Is there a significant difference in the reading attitude level of low performing freshmen education students before and after an intertextual reading intervention program?

# 2.2. Instruments

Two instruments were used in the study: Adolescent Reading Attitudes Survey (ARAS) and Intertextual Modules.

2.2.1. Adolescent Reading Attitudes Survey (ARAS). The objective of this instrument is to assess students' reading attitude, especially struggling readers (Conradi et al., 2013) like the participants of the study. This is a five-point Likert Scale developed by McKenna, Simkin, Conradi, and Lawrence

(in McKenna & Stahl, 2009), with high internal consistency and validity. This survey has four subscales: recreational reading in print settings, academic reading in print settings, recreational reading in digital settings, and academic reading in digital settings. It consists of 41 items and the participants were asked to encircle one of the boxes that tell how they feel about each item. Responses range from *negative* to *positive* which has an equivalent score of 6 to 1. The table below shows the subscales, scores, and its interpretation. This instrument encourages student's engagement and sincerity. This was also administered to the research participants before and after the IRI program.

### Table 1:

ARAS Guide to Interpreting Scores
(McKenna et al. as cited in McKenna & Stahl, 2009)

Subscale	Negative	Somewhat negative	Neutral/ indifferent	Somewhat positive	Positive
Recreational Reading in Print Settings	12-24	25-36	37-47	48-59	60-72
Recreational Reading in Digital Settings	9-18	19-27	28-35	36-44	45-54
Academic Reading in Print Settings	10-20	21-30	31-39	40-49	50-60
Academic Reading in Digital Settings	10-20	21-30	31-39	40-49	50-60

2.2.2. Intertextual Modules. The researcher developed five intertextual modules which were used in the conduct of the IRI program. Copies of modules were stored in each computer at the assigned computer lab and shown to the participants right before each module was delivered. Importantly, these guide participants in the sequence of lessons and activities. Its main aim was to improve the reading attitude of the low performing freshmen education students. These were validated by a panel of experts and evaluators (reading teachers and professors) and students. Importantly, one lesson in each module was pilot tested to a group of first year students (not the participants of the study); before the final revision was done. Schemata of the research participants (identification of participants' schemata were primarily based on researcher's discretion, since the researcher is a native and is presently residing in the locale of the study), and intertextuality were considered in the selection of texts and themes and writing of the five modules. Table 2 reflects module 1 content: its intertextual strategy, theme, and the intertextual resources used.

Module	Intertextual Strategy	Theme/Title	Intertextual Resources
1	Conflicting Texts Arrangement	How We Came to Be	<ol> <li>An Example of Scientific Inquiry: Darwin and Evolution (Essay</li> <li>Natural Selection &amp; Adaptation (Essay)</li> <li>What is Evolution (You Tube video)</li> <li>Evolution – What Darwin Never Knew (Video)</li> <li>The Story of How Everything Began (Narrative trade book)</li> <li>The Creation: The Earth is a Witness (You Tube video)</li> <li>God of Wonders (You Tube video)</li> <li>The Scientific Case Against Evolution (Essay on internet material)</li> <li>The Debate of Bill Nye and Ken Ham (You tube: Video)</li> <li>Creation vs. Evolution: Can Evolution Be Harmonized with the Bible Teaching about Creation? (Essay: internet material)</li> </ol>

# Table 2:

Module 1 Content

# 2.3. Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering was done in three phases. The first phase, Pre-Intervention Phase, was conducted before the intervention program. In this phase the motivational tools were selected, prepared, and photocopied vis-à-vis the number of research participants. Specifically, the researcher gathered materials and selected appropriate texts before writing the five modules. The choice of texts and themes were based primarily on the schemata of the participants, as mentioned earlier, like for example in Module 1, the theme is about *How We Came to Be*, focusing on *creation* and *evolution*. Most people in the locale of the study are devout Catholic, and this is the main reason why the researcher chose this theme for most of the participants, if not all, could relate to it. Importantly, all modules revolve around the central theme that if one has faith in God we could overcome challenges in life; it might be typhoon, poverty, oppression, etc. Importantly, the pre-test (ARAS) was administered to the participants.

In the second phase, Intertextual Reading Intervention Phase, the researcher conducted the intervention program in one of the computer laboratories of the school. Each module was conducted in a three-hour session once a week for one month; therefore, the program lasted for six months or one semester (Armstrong & Newman, 2011). Table 3 reflects the module delivery plan which was conceptualized by the researcher and had also undergone construct validation and pilot study.

# Table 3:

Module Delivery Plan

Module Part	Description	Details of Activity	Time Frame
Preparation	Review	Recap of previous intertextual strategy	15 min
Pretest	Pre-assessment	Administration of pretest: multiple- choice type of test	15 min
Connecting and Customizing Schemata	Activation of students' schemata	Motivation of students by activating their schemata through semantic map, brainstorming, pictures, etc.	30 min
		Presentation of Module's main output (e.g. comparative essay in Module 1)	
Creating & Organizing Intertextual Strategy (IS)	Presentation of new IS and intertextual materials	Discussion of new IS (e.g. in Module 1: conflicting texts arrangement)	30 min
		Students are acquainted with all the intertextual materials to be read/studied	
Independent Reading of Intertextual Resources	Individual reading of intertextual materials	Presentation of the intertextual materials.	7 ½ hrs
		(Cont	inued)
(Continued)			
Module Part De	escription	Detail of Activity	Time Frame
		Before reading each text, motivation/introduction is conducted using video clip, graphic organizer, etc.	
		Unlocking of difficult words/terms follows using context clues, graphic organizers, dictionary, etc.	

		After reading the text, students answer/accomplish a graphic organizer, creative outputs like drawing, or comprehension questions etc.	
Conversing	Group discussion	Students are divided into groups for a discussion and try to make sense of all texts they have read by accomplishing a graphic organizer	1 hr
		Each group will choose a reporter and a secretary	
Class Sharing of Interpretations/ Perspectives	Class discussion	Reporter of each group will present in class what they have discussed, using their graphic organizer	45 min
		With the guidance of the teacher, a dynamic exchange of ideas is expected to ensue in this phase	
Producing Output	Essay writing	Following their group's graphic organizer, students work individually the expected output (essay)	1 hr
		They could also follow other group's graphic organizer; and use other texts (not included in the Module) which they think would help them come up with a better output	
Posttest	Post-assessment	Same test in pretest is conducted as posttest	15 min

Lastly, the Post-Intervention Data Gathering Phase, was done after the intervention program. The researcher administered the same test in phase one as posttest, in order to find out the effect of the intervention on the reading attitude of the participants.

# 2.4. Data Analysis Procedure

The ARAS was administered before and after the IRI program in order to know if there is a significant difference in the participants' reading attitude. The researcher computed first the score of each student in their pre-posttest results using the ARAS Scoring Guide. The ARAS Guide to Interpreting Scores was utilized in interpreting the results and then, descriptive statistics: mean and standard deviation were computed. Lastly, paired t-test was computed which was set at .01 level of significance. The overall score of each participant in all dimensions were also considered in the analysis. The researcher utilized the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to compute and analyze the data.

### **3.0. Results and Discussion**

Results of Adolescent Reading Attitudes Survey is reflected in Table 4. This instrument assessed students' reading attitude in terms of the four subscales, as cited previously. It shows that there is a significant difference in students' reading attitude before and after the IRI intervention in the following posttest scores: (a) students' recreational reading in print setting (M = 54.1, SD = 7.7), (b) recreational reading in digital setting (M = 39.0, SD = 7.3), (c) academic reading in print setting posttest (M = 47.5, SD = 7.9), (d) academic reading in digital setting (M = 47.9, SD = 6.6); as compared to pretest scores: (a) students' recreational reading in print setting (M = 49.5, SD = 7.9), t (37) = 3.16, p = <.003, (b) recreational reading in digital setting (M = 43.6, SD = 7.8), t (37) = 2.95, p = .005, and (d) academic reading in digital setting (M = 43.0, SD = 6.8), t (37) = 4.86, p = <.001.

### Table 4:

Mean Attitude Score of Students Before and After the IRI Program

Dimensions of Attitude	Pretest Score		Posttest Score		. 1	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	— t-value	p-value
Recreational Reading in Print	49.5		54.1			
Setting	(Somewhat	7.9	(Somewhat	7.7	3.16	.003
-	Positive)		Positive)			
Recreational Reading in	34.4		39.0			
Digital Setting	(Neutral/	7.7	(Somewhat	7.3	3.39	.002
	Indifferent)		Positive)			
Academic Reading in Print	43.6		47.5			
Setting	(Somewhat	7.8	(Somewhat	7.9	2.95	.005
	Positive)		Positive)			
Academic Reading in	43.0		47.9			
Digital Setting	(Somewhat	6.8	(Somewhat	6.6	4.86	< .001
	Positive)		Positive)			
Overall Attitude Score	170.5	25.0	188.5	24.7	4.45	< .001

N=37,  $\alpha = 0.01$ 

Consequently, there is also a significant difference between the students' posttest overall result (M = 188.5, SD = 24.7) which is significantly higher than their pretest overall result (M = 170.5,SD = 25.0, t(37) = 4.45, p = <.001. These results contradict several studies substantiating that low performing students have negative attitude towards reading (Jang, Conradi, McKenna, & Jones, 2015). It shows that before the start of the IRI program students reported that their attitude towards reading is somewhat positive, especially in line with recreational reading in digital setting. However, after the program, the students' neutral or indifferent attitude improved to a somewhat positive attitude. In fact, all the dimensions of reading attitude showed significant difference. A possible explanation of this is most of the students, if not all, are exposed to digital media like Facebook, YouTube, and other electronic materials. Further, the IRI program was conducted in a computer lab and majority of the intertextual materials used were digital media (e.g., videos from You Tube, e-books, internet resources, etc.). Specifically, in Module 1, 60% of the intertextual materials are digital media, 64% in Module 2, 92% in Module 3, 50% in Module 4, and 70% in Module 5. This could have been the cause why the participants' reading attitude improved or heightened after the IRI program, as mirrored in the study of Chen et al. (2013) that reading digital e-books) boost the reading attitude of the EFL tertiary students. This is materials (e.g., corroborated in the study of Conradi, Jang, Bryant, Craft, and McKenna, (2013) attesting that digital media is one of the factors that affect reading attitude. Moreover, movies and video clips were also

used in the program which could have caused the increase in the participants' reading attitude mean score (Detmering, 2010; Turnau, 2004; Vetrie, 2004; Williams, 2007).

### 4.0. Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of this investigation show that there is a significant difference in reading attitude among the research participants before and after the IRI program. It could be concluded that the use of intertextual strategies and intertextual materials (especially the utilization of computer lab, digital media, and internet resources) are crucial in the conduct of an IRI program. The study demonstrates that the IRI program provides a symmetry of the whole reading process; for it is evident that myriad of studies focuses only on reading comprehension, which is only half of the reading process, for the other half is reading motivation (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010); and reading attitude is one of the important motivational constructs. Thus, many students know how to comprehend texts/materials but are not motivated to read (Pitcher et al., 2007), or have negative attitude towards reading. Research participants will become teachers; it is therefore vital to develop in them the love of reading. Importantly, this research suggests that the IRI program could be an indispensable tool in the conduct of reading intervention program in the tertiary level, in order to enhance not only the reading comprehension of low performing tertiary students but also the reading attitude. All students deserve equal educational opportunities (Meissel et al., 2016); however, research shows that low performing students are at risk and often times neglected. These students need all the help they could get; it might be from their teachers, parents, school administrators, and other stakeholders.

The findings of this study have a number of important implications for future practice; like for instance, those instructors and professors who are still using one textbook to teach the entire duration of a certain course work or subject (Armstrong & Newman, 2011) should utilize multiple texts that could enhance their students' reading attitude. Further, reading teachers should also conduct reading survey or assessment before they start any intervention program. Its primary aim is to know what genres and types of reading materials, topics, and reading activities the target students like to read and participate. It is also important that tertiary administrators and curriculum designers should incorporate teaching and learning strategies that promote intertextual connections as integral part in designing and implementing a curriculum. College students, especially low performing college freshmen teacher education students (including other students as well), are encouraged to read other reading materials that are connected to a particular topic in school and hence, might cultivate deeper understanding and develop a positive attitude towards reading, which will help them survive in college. It is also recommended that the State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) library should have available reading materials that cater to the need and interest of their students. Furthermore, access to WiFi in some strategic places in their campus, especially in the library, to help students accomplish their academic requirements, is of paramount importance (Coiro, 2012). Several studies show that increased access to various reading materials in school improves students' literacy capabilities (including reading attitude) particularly in developing countries (Brasell, 2013) like the Philippines.

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