Impacting Attitudes towards Reading in Secondary School Students: A Direct Reading Strategy Intervention

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether direct reading strategy instruction (DRSI) would be effective in enhancing attitudes towards reading in Yemeni pre-university students studying English as a foreign language. Participants were 60 Yemeni students who were given the adult survey of reading attitude questionnaire before and after treatment to investigate their attitudes towards reading after four months of focus on reading strategy instruction. DRSI is the core of this investigation (the independent variable), whereas reading attitude (the dependent variable) constitutes the target of DRSI activities. Data for this study were collected through an adult survey using the reading attitude questionnaire (ASRA). The results revealed a significant improvement in the reading attitudes of students in the experimental group compared to their pre-test performance and to that of the control group. The mean scores of the experimental group in the pre-and post-ASRA were 2.28 and 3.81, respectively, indicating an improvement in their attitudes towards reading. However, the mean scores of the control group in the pre- and post-ASRA were 2.39 and 2.35, respectively, indicating no improvement in their attitudes towards reading. Such results are consistent with related studies that suggest that strategy-based instruction could be rewarding for improving reading attitudes.

Keywords: Attitudes, Direct reading instruction, Intervention, Reading

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Introduction

Reading is considered to be a core component of any language. It is a skill that every language teacher has to strive to develop in his/her students so that they will be able to use this skill better at the secondary level and later (Nuttall, 1996). Academically, Levine *et al.* (2000:1) state that the ability to read academic texts is considered one of the most important skills that university students of English as a second language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) need to acquire". Reading comprehension is considered the essence of reading (Durkin, 1993). It is essential not only for academic learning in all subject areas, but also for professional success and, indeed, to encourage lifelong learning (Vacca, 2002; Pritchard *et al., 1999*; Rings, 1994). Similarly, Ambigapathy (2001) stressed the importance of enhancing learners' reading ability. When learning English, reading is undoubtedly a major goal for most school students. It may even be that several students have a greater need for it than any other language skill. Given this situation, the purpose of reading strategy instruction in primary and secondary schools should prepare students to be independent readers at higher levels. Kasper (2000) and Singhal (2001) suggest that to meet the reading needs of students in the 21st century, educators must develop effective instructional means for teaching reading comprehension and reading strategy use.

1. *Importance of English in Yemen*

As Yemen is opening itself to the world, the teaching of English in Yemen has become more significant. Considering this, English is taught in the seventh grade of basic education in public schools in the country. Additionally, it is a compulsory subject in the curriculum of the last three years of basic education as well as in secondary education. Students usually have six classes of 45 min each per week (Moharram, 1997).

The English language plays an important role in Yemen. It is the language mostly used in fields such as education, medicine, business, and information media such as television, the press, and international communication (Azzan, 2001; Cheekeong et al. 2014). There are daily TV bulletins in English and weekly programs reviewing international events together with another for teaching English to school students. In print media, there are two English newspapers - Yemen Times and Yemen Observer - in which educators and writers in different fields discuss different topics of education, politics, commerce, and technology.

Furthermore, English has become an essential prerequisite for obtaining jobs in most sectors of Yemen. Many foreign and local companies in the country seek people who have a good command of English. Although Arabic is used in most government offices, English in Yemen, as stated by Ghanim (2005), is essential for self-improvement. All international organizations, most non-governmental organizations, and some well-paying government offices, such as Yemania Airlines and the Commercial Bank of Yemen, require a good mastery of English. The perception that greater fluency in English guarantees better employment opportunities has led to an increase in the demand for English language courses. Language forecasters, according to

Graddol (1997), predict that the international demand for English will increase over the next three decades. A similar trend was observed nationwide. According to Moharram (1997) and Ghanim (2005), many Yemeni students are keen to pursue post-graduate studies abroad or in Yemeni universities where English is used as a medium of instruction.

Once Yemen has accepted the view that learning English is a must in the modern world, it has become a matter of urgency to examine how best English can be effectively taught to students. Therefore, special attention should be paid to the effective teaching of English since it is not the medium of instruction in schools and there is not much exposure to English outside the classroom.

2. *Reading in Yemeni EFL Classes: Current Situation*

As far as reading comprehension is concerned, this study focuses on the method used to impart this skill to Yemeni pre-university students and its implications for the teaching of reading. According to Battah (1999), studies on teachers of English in some Yemeni schools have revealed that many of these teachers are unaware of reading comprehension as a cognitive skill. Likewise, a study conducted by Ba-Matraf (1997) provides insights into the use of reading instruction in three secondary schools. Her study revealed that students did not know how, when and why reading skills and strategies should be utilized. Teachers did not inform students about the nature of the techniques they used or how these techniques could be used to improve their reading comprehension. Accordingly, the students did not know why these techniques were used or how and when they should be used.

3. *Statement of the Problem*

Given the increasing need for high literacy skills in order to function in the 21st century workplace, it is, therefore, crucial for students to achieve adequate competence in reading skills and strategies, because being a skilled and comprehensive reader is very important for knowledge acquisition in all content areas, as well as for literacy demands outside schools (Simonsen and Singer, 1992). However, most Yemeni students were found to have low interest in reading, even at the university level. The substantial number of students in secondary schools, as well as in tertiary levels, who struggle with reading comprehension highlights the need for effective classroom techniques to improve their attitudes towards reading (Azzan, 2001; Ba-Matraf, 1997; Bil-Fageeh, 1999).

While a number of researchers have examined reading comprehension and the use of strategies, very little research has been conducted on reading attitudes. It is also recognized that students frequently rank reading classes as their least favorite or hardest. However, little research has been conducted to determine whether direct reading strategies can improve students' attitudes towards reading.

Azzan (2001) asserted that there is a necessity to restructure reading instruction from the grassroots level to the tertiary level in a graded manner. Azzan adds that current practices in reading instruction lack sound pedagogical strategies. The fact that students at the secondary and tertiary levels lack adequate proficiency in reading in the foreign language with speed and comprehension proves beyond any reasonable doubt the inefficacy of the reading program, suggesting the need for an urgent review of reading pedagogy and the adoption of an instructional module that actually improves students' interest in reading.

Therefore, if reading is to be taught effectively within the limited time available in the school curriculum so that students can read and understand books and journals written in English and read references written in English at the university level, certain steps must be taken to teach and learn reading effectively in schools. There appears to be a need for DRSI to enhance students' attitudes towards reading.

4. *Limitation of the Study*

The present study was a quasi-experimental type restricted to Yemeni pre-university students studying in Hadhramout district. This study focuses on investigating the effect of direct reading strategy instruction in enhancing students' attitudes towards reading. The study was restricted to only one male school in Hadhramout district. The school consists of students from urban and rural areas. Selecting only this school provides the advantage of obtaining test samples from both urban and rural backgrounds, which together constitute a fairly representative profile of the student community in Yemen.

Literature Review

Research on second language reading has begun to focus on readers' strategies (Singhal 2001). Reading strategies is a term that is used to refer to a monitoring system which involves self-reflection and awareness of what they reveal about the way readers manage their interaction with written texts and how these strategies are related to text comprehension (Singhal, 2001). These strategies indicate how readers conceive of a task, how they make sense of what they read, and what they do when they do not understand (Singhal, 2002).

Within the last two decades, emphasis in comprehension research has shifted from what students comprehend to how they comprehend. Experts are concerned with identifying comprehension skills, while current researchers, influenced by linguistic and psycholinguistic theories, focus on identifying strategies used to comprehend a text. This shift is an important step towards improving comprehension strategies. From this perspective, L2 and FL reading theorists such as Phillips (1975) and Hosenfeld et al. (1981) have attempted to investigate the type of reading skills and strategies used by good readers.

Based on the idea that learning and reading a language are skills, and therefore teachable through training and "scaffolding" (Vygotsky, 1962), many researchers have supported the use of explicit teaching of specific strategies to improve students' reading comprehension (Carrell,

1989; Jiménez et al. 1996, Carrell, 1998). From this perspective, researchers believe that teaching reading strategies to Yemeni students is important. Therefore, building a greater awareness of reading strategies in students will enable them to become aware of what they are doing, and if they are alert to the processes underlying the learning that they are involved in, then learning will be more effective. Hence, explicit teaching of reading strategies should be adopted to instruct students on how to use such strategies effectively.

1. *Direct Reading Strategy Instruction*

Direct instruction is a form of clear instruction that teachers use to enable students to understand what they have learned (Villaume & Beabham, 2002). This illustrates the transition of responsibility for the learning process from teacher to student. In the early stages of the lessons, the teacher was in control of the teaching process. Teachers should help students be responsible for their own learning. During guided practice, responsibility gradually shifts from learning (Veenman, 1992).

To enable students to become metacognitively aware of reading strategies, teachers should explain the ways related to how, when, and why to use these strategies while reading. The relevance of studies on reading and metacognition is that if students of English are taught useful reading strategies and consciously think about the strategies they use when reading, they may read better and more efficiently (Crain, 1988). Teaching students metacognitively aware of using reading skills and strategies is very important in achieving this goal (Blachowicz and Zabroske, 1990).

Researchers in the area of reading strategy instruction have recommended the involvement of developing metacognitive awareness of reading strategies (Brown et al., 1986). Teachers in this case should not only provide their students with a repertoire of reading strategies used by good readers (Sarig, 1987; Anderson, 1991) because these reading strategies alone cannot account for the effectiveness of reading comprehension. Thus, teaching metacognitive strategies along with the strategies used by good readers could enable students to be aware of when and how to use such strategies.

Taking the EFL reading context into account, direct reading strategy instruction seems appropriate for enhancing reading comprehension and metacognition. However, the question that needs to be addressed here is how teachers should provide students with knowledge of strategies and of implementing these strategies while reading. Winograd and Hare (1988) proposed five steps that constitute teacher explanations, as described below:

(1) *What is this strategy*? Teachers need to provide students with a description of their strategies. The aim of this introductory step is to clearly demonstrate the strategy so that students have a firm understanding and foundation for mastering the strategy. The students are ready to move to the next stage of instruction when they appear to have a general understanding of the strategy being used, and (2) *why a strategy should be learned*. Teachers should explain

why they provide information about the strategy. (3) *How to use the strategy*. Teachers must model the use of a strategy by thinking aloud or verbalizing the thoughts they might have while reading. (4) *When and where strategy should be used*. Teachers should explain the use of the strategy with familiar text and describe when and where to use a strategy, and (5) *how to evaluate the use of the strategy*. Evaluating or making judgments is the ultimate step when interacting with text. This is not a single holistic strategy that can be precisely defined or illustrated. At this stage, the teacher should show his/her students how to evaluate their use of strategy by employing fix-up strategies to compensate for their failure to comprehend a particular passage.

2. *Attitude towards Reading*

The reading attitude is a complex theoretical construct. It can be defined in various ways. For example, it is "a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation" (Alexander & Filler, 1976:1) or "a state of mind, accompanied by feelings and emotions that make reading more or less probable" (Smith, 1990:215).

According to Reeves (2002), cited in Yamashita (2004), many researchers agree that reading attitude is defined by three components: cognitive (personal and evaluative beliefs), affective (feelings and emotions), and conative (action readiness and behavioral intentions). Attempts to understand students' reactions to reading using this triadic model are illustrated in Figure 1, where the three components constitute the concept of attitude.

Figure 1
Components of Reading Attitude (based on Yamashita, 2004)
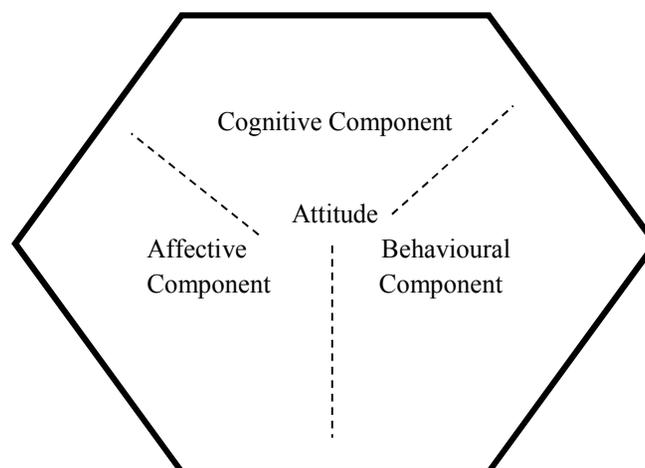
However, the majority of theories and models have been formulated by cognitive psychologists who emphasize cognitive factors in reading. The affective domain, as it relates to the act of reading, must be considered. This component includes the reader's attitude, interest, and beliefs about reading. Two affective models are composed by Mathewson (1985, 1994) and Ruddell and Speaker (1985). Mathewson proposed a reading model that describes the central role

played by a reader's attitude. Attitude towards reading comprises the reader's prevailing feelings about reading, action readiness for reading, and his/her evaluative beliefs about reading. Secondary factors include both external and internal motivations, such as incentives, purposes, norms, and setting, as well as the internal emotional state of the reader before and during reading. The importance of Mathewson's model is its definition of a reader's attitude and beliefs, as they relate to the act of reading. Ruddell and Speaker (1985) presented a model with three interacting components during reading: the reader environment, declarative and procedural knowledge, and knowledge utilization and control. The reader environment refers to the text, task, source of authority, and sociocultural meanings of the text and classroom environment. This was the learning environment presented by the teacher. Declarative and procedural knowledge describe the reader's knowledge of word analysis and text-processing strategies, among others. Affective and cognitive conditions constitute the reader's stance. Knowledge utilization and control relate to the reader's meaning-construction process. Readers' prior knowledge and beliefs are fundamental components of this model. The socio-cultural values of the reader include (1) attitudes towards reading and content, (2) motivation, and (3) beliefs and values of the reader. It is on the effective date that the reader sets the goal direction, expectations for product, and expectation of the time needed to reach the product. Ruddell and Unrau (1994, 2004) maintain that the social context of the classroom is important for readers' success. This "intertextuality" largely depends upon the reader creating a goal for the act of reading, meaningful dialogue, negotiated meaning and understanding of the text.

Gillespie (1993, p.329) confirms the relationship between achievement and attitude and motivation when she writes that a "definite positive relationship exists between affective factors and achievement". Cothern and Collins (1992, p.88) explain this relationship as follows: "[w]hen success or failure occurs; corresponding beliefs influence attitudes causing slight alterations. This cause-effect relationship reveals the strong link between academic achievement and attitude".

To explore the attitudes of secondary school students towards reading, factors such as students' personal experience in reading, students' confidence in reading, parents' attitudes towards reading, and teachers' ways of teaching reading are considered important factors that greatly influence students' attitudes towards reading (Wang, 2000). Our study intends to determine whether the techniques of teaching reading proposed by the study have any effect on students' attitudes towards reading.

Generally, Arab learners' low motivation to learn English poses the most serious obstacle to achieving the goals of teaching English in Arabic-speaking countries. Although Arab EFL learners come to the classroom motivated and excited to learn English, ineffective teaching methods may gradually lead them to lose interest. Kharma and Hajjaj (1989, p.2) state that

> "[A]part from the motivation provided by the novelty of learning a new
> language, by the teacher's techniques, and by the materials used, there is
> very little motivation for learning the language, compared to that for

acquiring a first language. Furthermore, the attitude toward English as a foreign language is that it is a 'school subject' rather than a means of communication.'

Al-Sohbani (1997) confirms Kharma and Hajjaj's contention concerning Arab EFL learners' motivation and attitudes. Al-Sohbani found, for example, that most of the Yemeni learners' motivation in learning English is strongly influenced by their teachers' attitudes and the teaching methods those learners are exposed to while learning English. Furthermore, Al-Sohbani presents two excerpts to illustrate this point:

"I like English when it was introduced in Grade Seven of basic education because the teacher who taught me in that grade was inspiring. However, this year I feel I dislike the subject (English) because of my present teacher" (p.253).

Most English teachers frustrate students who try to answer questions by focusing on mistakes. This student becomes afraid of attempting again and as a result dislikes both the teacher and the language…"

Teachers who use different teaching methods provide students with various views on reading. Eldredge (1991) found that L1 children in an entire language class had an extremely positive attitude towards reading. This positive attitude was a result of making the whole-language class student-centered, and a cooperative way of learning was employed in which children could choose books that they liked and read many literature-based books. Teachers in this teaching process play the role of coaches or facilitators (Morrow, 1992). Various books were read by children with the help of teachers who helped those who faced difficulties in phonics, words, and background knowledge for comprehension. Teachers in the whole class are able to assess children's differences and provide opportunities for children with different backgrounds and levels to develop their strengths along with their help. Through this way of teaching the whole language class, children may learn that reading is a process of getting ideas, during which they enjoy the pleasure of reading.

To create an exciting atmosphere for learning, teachers should prepare various activities so that students can read, talk, discover, and construct meaning and then share the meaning with others (Oldfather & Dahl, 1994). This way of teaching enables students to experience literacy by themselves and enables them to relate literacy to their own lives, which is necessary for them to form a positive attitude towards reading. Therefore, teachers should provide models to help learners understand how to use the appropriate reading strategies. Teachers' support in the three stages of reading (before, during, and after reading)–should meet young learners' needs to arouse different interests (Dombey, 1999).

Jiménez (1997) stated that metacognitive training has positive effects on developing students' reading strategies. His study focused on training students to become metacognitively aware of

the use of reading strategies. After six months of training, students showed good ability to use effective reading strategies. They also demonstrated positive shifts towards reading, willingness to work hard, and appreciation of the goal of direct instruction.

To add icing to the cake, modelling is considered an excellent strategy for changing attitudes towards reading (Mathewson, 1985:854). According to this author "[s]eeing an admired person reading can stimulate heightened reading behavior in a reluctant reader.

Mathewson's view is congruent with the views of Bandura (1977), Perez (1986) and Wheldall and Entwistle (1988) in the sense that students are in need to have appropriate reading role models. The importance of modelling is emphasized by these authors for the sake of developing positive attitudes towards reading. Therefore, it is a duty of teachers to provide an appropriate role model. This model of reading behavior is very important for improving students' reading attitudes.

Research Objective

This study aimed to identify the levels of students' attitudes towards reading before and after one semester of instruction in metacognitive reading strategies.

Question of the Study

To what extent does the use of direct reading strategy instruction change Yemeni secondary school students' attitudes towards reading?

Methodology

This section provides a summary of the research methodology used in this study as follows:

1. *Design of the Study*

This was a quasi-experimental study with a non-equivalent control group pre-test and post-test design. The study design included one independent (experimental) variable and one dependent variable. The independent variable was direct reading strategy instruction proposed for this study versus regular reading instruction. The dependent variable was the reading attitude differences between the experimental and control groups, measured through a questionnaire. The experimental group received instruction on reading comprehension strategies based on direct/explicit instruction. The control group was taught using a traditional method, in which grammar and pronunciation were emphasized in teaching reading. Both the experimental and control groups were pre-tested at the same time shortly before the experimental treatment began. After this pre-test, the students in the experimental group received experimental treatment. At the end of the treatment, all students were given the same questionnaire once more as a posttest.

2. *Research Sample*

The total population of this study comprised 60 students studying in Grade 11 of secondary education. Classes in the school were already formed with almost 32 students in each class. Two classes, each consisting of 30 students, were selected through non-random assignment. One class was used as the control group, and the other as the experimental group. The subjects were of similar age, ranging from to 20-21 years. They were all Yemeni students studying English as a Foreign Language. At the time of this study, they had been studying English for six years. They were all homogeneous with regard to age, sex, ethnicity, mother tongue, exposure to English, and educational and cultural background.

3. *Instrumentation*
3.1 Adult Survey of Reading Attitude

Students' attitudes towards reading were measured using a questionnaire. This instrument was based on the work of Smith's (1991) - Adult Survey of Reading Attitude (hereafter referred to as ASRA). The adaptation of the ASRA was to enable its use with FL students at the secondary school level. The questionnaire was administered to students during normal class periods. The questionnaire took approximately 15–20 minutes to complete. To achieve this objective, the wording of some items was modified so that they were easily comprehensible to EFL students. Subsequently, the revised ASRA was subjected to a pilot study. It was pilot-tested on a population of 20 EFL students studying at a secondary school in Tarim, a city in Yemen. The reliability of the ASRA in this study was Cronbach's alpha = 0.92, indicating a high degree of consistency in measuring reading attitudes among EFL speakers of English.

The adapted ASRA was intended to measure students' attitudes towards reading before and after the experiment. Therefore, students' attitudes towards reading were measured using 25 questions and items. Three categories of reading attitudes were assessed. The categories included (1) reading activities and enjoyment, (2) anxiety and difficulty, and (3) social reinforcement. Each of these categories has its own objective. Category One (10 items) measured the extent to which the students read for pleasure. Category Two (9 items) measured the extent to which the students experienced problems or became upset when reading. Finally, Category Three (6 items) assessed the extent to which the students' reading activities were recognized and reinforced by others (e.g., friends, family, colleagues, teachers, etc.).

The students responded to the statements on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 5 (5 = strongly agree) to 1 (1= strongly disagree). The students were asked to read each statement and circle the number that they applied to indicate the extent to which the attitude described in the statement corresponded to their own attitudes. Ten items concerned reading activity and enjoyment, namely items number 1, 3, 7, 8,9, 12, 14, 18, 20 and 25, for example 'reading in English is enjoyable.' Nine items concerned anxiety and difficulty, namely, 2, 4, 5, 6, 10, 13, 15, 16, and 19, such as 'I find reading in English very difficult.' Six items focused on social

reinforcement, namely, items 11, 17, 21, 22, 23, and 24. An example of this category is, My English teacher encourages me to read a lot of books in English.

Results

1. *Effect of DRSI on Students' Attitudes towards Reading*

To answer this research question, *to what extent does the use of direct reading strategy instruction change Yemeni secondary school students' attitudes towards reading?* the results of the pre- ASRA of the experimental and control groups in this subsection are presented and analyzed. It begins with a description of the pre-ASRA and post-ASRA overall scores of the experimental group, and then the pre- and post-ASRA overall scores of the control group. The results of the pre- and post-ASRA in terms of three subscales (i.e., reading activity and enjoyment (henceforth referred to as RAE), anxiety and difficulty (henceforth referred to as AD), and social reinforcement (henceforth referred to as SR) are then provided for each group. Inferential ASRA results for both the experimental and control groups are also provided. To find out the effect size of the independent variable (DRSI) on the dependent variable (reading attitudes), an effect size 'Cohen's d' (Cohen, 1992) is reported for the experimental and control groups' post-test mean scores difference. Finally, a summary of the data for both groups was presented.

2. *Experimental Group's Descriptive Statistics Findings*

The students' responses in the experimental group in terms of the overall items of the ASRA and the three subscales identified, RAE, AD, and SR, were examined. The overall mean ASRA score in the pre-test for the experimental group was 2.28, indicating low overall attitudes towards reading.

The data were further analyzed according to the three ASRA subscales. The students' responses in the experimental group were examined in terms of three subscales: RAE, AD, and SR. As shown in Table 1, before the experiment, the mean RAE score of the experimental group was quite low (mean score = 2.32). Regarding AD, the mean score of the experimental group was also quite low (2.24). The third subscale, SR, assesses the extent to which a person's reading activities are recognized and reinforced by others (e.g., a teacher or a colleague). The students in the experimental group rated themselves with a mean score of 2.29.

Table 1

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Experimental Group in ASRA Sub-scales before the Experiment

Item	M	SD
RAE	2.32	1.0683
AD	2.24	1.0467
RS	2.29	1.1325

At the end of the experiment, the students' responses in terms of the overall items of ASRA, as well as the three subscales identified, RAE, AD, and SR, were again examined. The overall mean score of ASRA in the post-test was 3.81, indicating a high overall attitude towards reading.

The data were further analyzed according to the three ASRA subscales. Students' responses in the experimental group for the post-ASRA were examined in terms of the three scales: RAE, AD, and SR. As shown in Table 2, the mean RAE score of the experimental group after the experiment was high (mean= 4.01). With respect to the AD subscale, the experimental group had a higher mean score of 3.56. The third scale was the SR. It assesses the extent to which a person's reading activities are recognized and reinforced by others (e.g., a teacher or classmate). The students in the experimental group rated themselves with a mean score of 3.87. The results indicate that students in the experimental group had obtained higher overall mean scores in the post- ASRA than the overall mean scores obtained in the pre-ASRA.

Table 2

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Experimental Group in ASRA Sub-scales after the Experiment

Sub-scale	M	SD
RAE	4.01	0.6203
AD	3.56	0.6401
SR	3.87	0.7979

3. *Control Group's Descriptive Statistics Findings*

The results for the control group are presented in Tables 3 and 4. The students' responses in the control group in terms of the overall ASRA and the three subscales identified (RAE, AD, and SR) were examined. The overall mean of ASRA in the pre-test for the control group was 2.39, indicating low overall attitudes towards reading.

The data were further analyzed according to the three pre-ASRA subscales (RAE, AD, and SR). As depicted in Table 3, the students' mean score on the RAE was moderate (2.48). For AD, the results showed that the students' mean scores on this subscale were quite low (2.34). For SR, students in the control group rated themselves with a low mean score of 2.33 on this sub-scale.

Table 3

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Control Group in ASRA Sub-scales before the Experiment

Item	M	SD
Reading Activities and enjoyment	2.48	0.9614
Anxiety and Difficulties	2.34	1.0435
Social Reinforcement	2.33	1.001

At the end of the experiment, the students' responses in terms of the overall items of ASRA, as well as the three subscales identified, RAE, AD, and SR, were again examined. The overall mean score of post-ASRA was 2.35, indicating low overall attitudes towards reading.

The data were further analyzed in terms of the three ASRA subscales (RAE, AD, and SR). Students' responses to these subscales are shown in Table 4. The mean RAE score of the control group after the experiment was low (mean= 2.43). In the second subscale, the mean score of the control group for AD level was still quite low (2.15). In SR, students in the control group after the experiment rated themselves with a moderate mean score of 2.53 on this last subscale.

Table 4
Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the Control Group in ASRA Sub-scales after the Experiment

Item	M	SD
Reading Activities and enjoyment	2.43	0.8077
Anxiety and Difficulties	2.15	0.831
Social Reinforcement	2.53	0.9227

4. *Inferential Analyses of the Experimental and Control Groups' Results*

The total raw scores for each of the students in each group were used in the ANCOVA test to determine the differences between the experimental and control groups. The initial pre-test ASRA score was used as a covariate in this study. ANCOVA was used to adjust for the initial differences between the groups. Gall et al. (1996:496) suggested that "the preferred statistical method is analysis of covariance in which the post-test mean of the experimental group is compared with the post-test mean of the control group with the pre-test scores used as a covariate".

Table 5 displays the results of the ANCOVA on the scores of students' attitudes towards reading. Based on the ANCOVA results, p-values <0.05 were reported for the students' attitudes towards reading. A statistically significant difference existed between the two groups in favor of the experimental group. ANCOVA on scores for the post-test, adjusted for pre-test performance, revealed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in favor of the experimental group with F (138.772) p- value = .000 < 0.05.

Table 5

Results of the Experimental and Control Groups from ANCOVA on Post-test Scores of the ASRA

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
groups	2045.989	1	2045.989		
error	840.379	57	14.743	138.772	.000
Total	2886.368	58			

Effect Size

Cohen's '*d*' (1992) measure was used to examine the effect of DRSI on students' attitudes towards reading. An effect size of (1.95) was found when comparing the overall items of reading attitudes. In terms of the three subscales, an effect size of 2.23 was found for RAE when comparing the results of the two groups. With regard to AD, an effect size of 1.93 was found, and an effect size of 1.58 was found for SR between the two groups, in favor of the experimental group.

5. *Summary of the Findings*

As shown in Table 6, the findings for the research question elicited by ASRA indicated that there were significant differences between the pre- and post-ASRA scores for the experimental group, with a mean difference of 1.53. The mean post-ASRA score was higher than the mean pre-ASRA score for the experimental group. This clearly indicated that the students' mean score of their post ASRA was higher than their pre- ASRA mean score; thus, there was a significant difference between the pre- ASRA mean score and the post- ASRA mean score in favor of the experimental group. However, it was found that the mean post-ASRA score was closer to the mean pre-ASRA score for the control group. This indicates that there was no significant difference between the pre-ASRA and post-ASRA mean scores of the control group.

Table 6

Summary of the Mean Scores and Standard Deviations Differences between Pre-ASRA and Post-ASRA of the Experimental and Control Groups

Measures	Experimental Group (*n*= 30)				Control Group (*n*= 30)			
	Pre-test		Post-test		Pre-test		Post-test	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Reading activities and Enjoyment	2.32	1.0683	4.01	0.6203	2.48	0.9614	2.43	0.8077
Anxiety and Difficulty	2.24	1.0467	3.56	0.6401	2.34	1.0435	2.15	0.831
Social Reinforcement	2.29	1.1325	3.87	0.7979	2.32	1.001	2.53	0.9227
Overall reading attitudes	2.28	1.0759	3.81	0.67	2.39	1.0005	2.35	0.8437

Discussion

Based on the results of the pre- and post-tests of the research instrument for the two groups, the results of the research question are answered and discussed separately below:

The Effect of DRSI on Students' Attitudes towards Reading

With regard to the effect of DRSI on students' attitudes towards reading, this section provides affirmative evidence of a significant reading attitude gain over a fixed period for the experimental group students. The experimental and control groups in the post-test had obtained overall mean scores of 3.81 and 2.35, respectively. With regard to the results of the attitudinal subscales, RAE, AD, and SR, the experimental group obtained higher mean scores on the three subscales than the control group. The mean score of RAE for the experimental group in the post-test was 4.01, which might indicate that students in the experimental group enjoyed reading and activities and were able to use reading strategies efficiently. This level of reading ability enables them to be motivated and to have positive attitudes towards reading. On the other hand, the mean score of the RAE for the control group in the post-test was 2.43, which might indicate that students in the control group faced difficulties in reading and therefore had negative attitudes towards reading. By examining the results of the subscale AD, the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the post-test were 3.56 and 2.15 respectively. The difference between the mean scores of the two groups might indicate that the students in the experimental group had fewer problems and confusion with reading, whereas the results of the control group might indicate that students in the control group experienced problems and confusion with reading. In examining the last component of reading attitudes SR, the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the post-test were 3.87 and 2.53, respectively. These results might indicate that the students in the experimental group were considered independent readers. They may come to see themselves as more capable and less reliant on teachers. On the other hand, the results obtained in this component indicate that the control group still felt the need for their academic activities to be recognized and reinforced by others.

The results of the current study are in line with the notion of Ruddell and Unrau (1994, 2004), who emphasized that affective conditions directly influence the reader's decision to read. They state that the attitude towards reading shapes the direction and intensity of the reader's interest in reading. This notion is congruent with Mathewson (1994) and McKenna (1994), who indicated that strategy use is also influenced by the reader's attitude towards reading and content. They all concur that attitude is a vital part of reading achievements. This result is consistent with the findings of previous empirical studies conducted by Suh (1999) and Jiménez (1997). Therefore, to enable students to be literate rather than illiterate, they must have positive attitudes towards reading. This can be achieved by teaching and modelling effective reading strategies and empowering students to acquire these strategies through teacher modelling (Mathewson, 1985).

Furthermore, the results of the current study are supported by Ruddell and Unrau's (1994, 2004) model of reading attitude acquisition and development presented earlier in the literature review of this study. In the opinion of Ruddell and Unrau (2004, p.1470), "attitude towards reading plays a critical role in the reading process by influencing intention to read." According to Mathewson's (1994) model, attitude acquisition and development are influenced by the following factors: (1) prevailing feelings about reading, (2) action readiness towards reading, and (3) evaluative beliefs about reading. Readers' intentions to read and continue reading are influenced by these factors. Additionally, the instructional settings provided by the teacher play an important role in readers' attitudes towards reading (Ruddell & Unrau, 1994). According to Philip (2004, p.331), negative attitudes towards reading might be attributed to "a lack of strategic ability (deficient in strategy knowledge and use) in processing reading texts." Based on McKenna's model (1994), beliefs about the outcome of reading and readers' metacognitive states are considered important factors influencing reading attitude acquisition and development. In this regard, several characteristics of DRSI, such as modelling and social interaction between the teacher and students and between students and students, are supposed to improve participants' attitudes towards reading.

Conclusion

It is possible to say that providing a fixed period of time for developing students' metacognitive knowledge and skills in reading academic materials is a valuable reading activity in facilitating students' attitude towards reading. A possible explanation for the effect of DRSI on reading attitude is not direct. A positive reading attitude may be enhanced through the way students gain confidence in reading, which in turn plays a crucial role in enhancing reading comprehension. As indicated by Ruddell and Unaru (2004), reading attitude always contributes to reading comprehension through the mediation of intention to read. That is, attitude towards reading influences the intention to read, which increases exposure to reading materials, which in turn improves reading comprehension. However, a positive attitude towards reading may not always increase students' reading behavior (i.e., exposure to print). This is especially true when one's reading behavior must compete with other options such as sports, computer games, social communities, and watching TV. A positive intention to read may not be sufficient to cause reading behavior to occur after school. Thus, gains in reading attitude are unlikely to enhance a student's exposure to print or after-school reading, which plays a crucial role in enhancing vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge. Consequently, even significant changes in reading attitude may not directly produce significant changes in reading comprehension. However, in this study, the results from the ASRA showed that the positive attitudes towards reading of the participants in the experimental group increased. This finding indicates that gains in reading attitude might contribute to their exposure to reading strategies and the modelling of these strategies given by the teacher. Consequently, a significant change in reading comprehension occurred. This is one of the most tenable interpretations that DRSI activity had a positive influence on students' attitudes towards reading in this study.

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