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Critical Reading Strategies and Their Impact on Reading Comprehension and Reading Motivation Among Bachelor of Public Administration Students at Basilan State College

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Abstract—*This study investigated the effects of Critical Reading Strategies (CRS) on the reading comprehension (RC) and reading motivation (RM) of Bachelor of Public Administration (BPA) students at Basilan State College (BSC), Philippines. Employing a quantitative, quasi-experimental two-group pre-test and post-test design, the study involved 120 BPA students assigned to either an experimental group (n = 60) receiving structured CRS instruction—encompassing pre-scanning, contextualization, summarizing, and text evaluation—or a control group (n = 60) following the conventional reading curriculum over six weeks. Data were collected using a validated Reading Comprehension Test (RCT) and an adapted Reading Motivation Questionnaire (RMQ). Descriptive and inferential statistics—including independent samples t-tests and repeated measures ANOVA—were employed to analyze the data. Results revealed no significant baseline difference between the groups in either RC ($t[118] = .483$, $p = .630$) or RM ($t[118] = .091$, $p = .928$). Post-intervention, the experimental group demonstrated significantly higher RC ($t[118] = 4.512$, $p < .001$, $d = .152$) and RM ($t[118] = 3.741$, $p = .001$, $d = .112$) than the control group. Within-group analyses confirmed significant improvement for the experimental group in both RC ($t[55] = 7.214$, $p < .001$, $d = .180$) and RM ($t[60] = 8.923$, $p < .001$, $d = .198$), while the control group showed marginal gains in RM and negligible gains in RC. The findings affirm the effectiveness of integrating CRS into higher education reading instruction and recommend institutionalizing such approaches in BPA programs to cultivate 21st-century literacy competencies.*

Keywords—*Critical reading strategies, reading comprehension, reading motivation, Bachelor of Public Administration, quasi-experimental, Basilan State College, Philippines.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is foundational to academic achievement, professional competence, and lifelong learning. In higher education programs that demand rigorous engagement with policy texts, legal documents, and governance literature—such as the Bachelor of Public Administration (BPA)—the capacity to read critically is not merely an academic skill but a professional imperative [1]. Public administration students are routinely required to analyze legislation, evaluate public policy papers, comprehend administrative mandates, and synthesize information from complex and often conflicting documentary sources [2]. Without robust reading competencies, students may struggle to engage meaningfully with discipline-specific texts, limiting both academic performance and eventual effectiveness as public servants.

Despite the well-established importance of reading proficiency, research consistently reveals that many college students—particularly in developing countries such as the Philippines—exhibit low levels of reading comprehension and motivation [3], [4]. This challenge is amplified in geographically isolated regions such as Basilan Province in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), where students face compounding disadvantages related to limited access to literacy resources, multilingual educational environments, and socioeconomic constraints [5]. Basilan State College (BSC), the sole state college in the province, serves a predominantly first-generation college student population, many of whom transition from basic education without adequate preparation for the reading demands of tertiary-level coursework.

Critical Reading Strategies (CRS) are instructional approaches designed to move readers beyond surface-level decoding toward active, evaluative, and reflective engagement with texts [6]. Strategies such as pre-scanning, contextual analysis, questioning, summarizing, and evaluating text credibility have been demonstrated to significantly improve both reading comprehension and motivation across various educational levels and contexts [7], [8]. In the Ethiopian context, Gebremariam and Weldeyohannes [9] found that CRS instruction led to statistically significant improvements in reading comprehension and reading motivation among ninth-grade students, with moderate effect sizes. Similar findings have been reported in South African [10], Asian [11], and Latin American educational contexts [12], suggesting that CRS transcend cultural and geographic boundaries in their pedagogical efficacy.

However, research specifically examining the effects of CRS on college-level students enrolled in public administration programs in the Philippine context—and particularly in BARMM—remains virtually nonexistent. Most studies focus on primary or secondary school learners [9], [13] or on English language majors in higher education [14]. This represents a significant gap in the literature, especially given that public administration curricula are inherently text-intensive and require students to engage

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critically with complex governance, legal, and social documents.

The present study addresses this gap by investigating the impact of CRS instruction on the reading comprehension and reading motivation of BPA students at Basilan State College, contributing to the growing body of evidence on the efficacy of CRS in higher education [15] and to the broader agenda of improving academic literacy in underserved Philippine regions.

Research Questions

1. Do CRS facilitate improvements in the reading comprehension of BPA students at Basilan State College?
2. Do CRS contribute to enhancing the reading motivation of BPA students at Basilan State College?
3. Are there significant differences between the pre- and post-intervention RC and RM scores of the experimental and control groups?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant to multiple stakeholders. For BSC faculty, it provides empirically grounded evidence for adopting CRS in reading-intensive subjects. For curriculum developers, it informs the integration of explicit reading strategy instruction into the BPA curriculum. For students, CRS equip them with metacognitive tools for academic success and for their future roles as public servants navigating complex governance and policy texts. For the broader research community, the study extends existing international literature on CRS to a novel Philippine higher education context, contributing contextually situated evidence that enriches theory and practice.

II. Literature Review

Critical Reading Strategies in Higher Education

Critical reading involves the active interrogation of texts—questioning assumptions, evaluating arguments, identifying rhetorical devices, and situating content within broader social and political contexts [6]. Van, Li, and Wan [15] conducted a systematic review of critical reading in higher education and confirmed that explicit instruction in CRS substantially improves students' analytical reading performance. Le et al. [14] identified key CRS—including activating prior knowledge, questioning, text marking, summarizing, and evaluating source credibility—and found through a mixed-methods study among Vietnamese English majors that these strategies were significantly correlated with improved comprehension outcomes. Vongkulluksn et al. [16] demonstrated through an experimental evaluation of a Critical Reading of Informational Texts (CRIT) scaffold that structured CRS instruction significantly enhanced students' comprehension of multiple scientific texts in higher education settings.

In the Philippine tertiary context, reading instruction has often remained confined to comprehension-level tasks without advancing toward the evaluative and critical dimensions demanded by disciplinary learning [3]. Some study in Basilan Province focuses on elementary students about the reading comprehension [41]. The present study responds to this limitation by situating CRS instruction within the specific disciplinary world of public administration.

Reading Comprehension and Reading Motivation

Reading comprehension (RC) refers to the complex cognitive process by which a reader constructs meaning from text [17]. It is influenced by vocabulary knowledge, prior content knowledge, text structure awareness, and metacognitive strategy use [18]. Research consistently affirms that students who employ strategic reading—questioning, prediction, and summarization—demonstrate superior comprehension relative to those who do not [9], [11].

Reading motivation (RM) refers to the constellation of goals, values, and beliefs that drive individuals' engagement with reading activities [19]. Guthrie and Wigfield [20] established that intrinsically motivated readers are more likely to engage deeply with texts, persist through challenging reading tasks, and achieve higher comprehension outcomes. Van der Sande et al. [21] conducted a meta-analysis of reading motivation interventions and found significant positive effects, particularly when interventions were explicitly delivered and coupled with strategy instruction—a design feature present in the current study.

Self-Determination Theory as Theoretical Framework

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), advanced by Ryan and Deci [23], provides a robust theoretical framework for understanding how CRS instruction can enhance reading motivation. SDT posits that human motivation is driven by three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy (feeling self-directed), competence (feeling capable and effective), and relatedness (feeling connected to others) [24]. When these needs are satisfied in educational settings, intrinsic motivation is fostered, leading to deeper engagement and better learning outcomes [25].

Applied to CRS instruction, the framework suggests that strategy training supports competence by equipping students with concrete tools for complex texts; autonomy by encouraging self-regulated reading; and relatedness through collaborative reading and discussion activities [9]. Urhahne and Wijnia [26] affirmed that SDT-based educational interventions produce durable improvements in academic engagement—a pattern evident in the current study's design. For BPA students at BSC, many of whom may hold negative self-perceptions of their reading abilities, SDT-aligned CRS instruction may be especially powerful in rebuilding motivational orientations toward academic reading.

CRS in Multilingual and Developing Contexts

The Philippine educational landscape is characterized by multilingualism, with students navigating mother tongue-based multilingual education in basic education before transitioning to English-medium instruction at the tertiary level [3]. In Basilan, students often use Yakan, Chavacano, or Filipino as primary languages, making English-medium public administration texts particularly challenging.

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Bangeni [27] found that language critically shapes cognitive reading strategies among disciplinary novices, underscoring the need for CRS instruction sensitive to linguistic context. Tiruneh [28] demonstrated that explicit reading strategy instruction significantly improved comprehension among upper primary students in Ethiopia, a multilingual context with parallels to Basilan's linguistic environment. Yigzaw and Chanie [29] similarly found that explicit CRS improved both comprehension and motivation among Grade 11 students in Ethiopia. Collectively, this evidence suggests that explicit, structured CRS instruction can overcome reading barriers in multilingual, under-resourced settings—lending particular relevance to the present study's BARMM context.

Gaps in the Literature

Despite the breadth of CRS research, several gaps remain. First, most studies are conducted at the primary or secondary school level [9], [13], [28], with fewer examining CRS effects on higher education students in social science disciplines such as public administration. Second, the Philippine context—and BARMM specifically—is severely underrepresented in reading intervention research. Third, there is a scarcity of studies examining both RC and RM simultaneously as dependent variables in public administration program contexts. The present study addresses all three gaps.

III. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, quasi-experimental two-group pre-test and post-test design. This approach is appropriate for real-world educational settings where true random assignment is constrained by institutional and ethical considerations [30], [31]. The independent variable was instructional approach (CRS instruction vs. conventional curriculum). The dependent variables were RC and RM, measured before and after a six-week intervention.

Research Context and Participants

The study was conducted at Basilan State College (BSC), the sole state college in Basilan Province, BARMM, Philippines, during Academic Year 2024–2025. Participants were 120 BPA students (1st to 3rd year) selected through purposive and convenience sampling across two intact BPA classes. One class was designated the experimental group (n = 60) and the other the control group (n = 60). An independent samples t-test confirmed no statistically significant baseline difference between the two groups in either RC or RM prior to the intervention.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the BSC Research Ethics Committee. All participants provided informed written consent. Participation was voluntary, and the right to withdraw at any time without academic consequence was guaranteed.

Intervention Design and Procedures

The CRS intervention was conducted over six weeks by a trained BPA English Communication instructor. It was structured around four core strategies adapted from the literature [9], [14], [16] and contextualized for BPA-relevant reading materials:

1. Pre-Scanning — surveying titles, headings, subheadings, and abstracts to activate prior knowledge and set reading purpose.
2. Contextualization — situating texts within their historical, political, and social governance contexts.
3. Summarizing — condensing key arguments and evidence from texts into structured summaries.
4. Text Evaluation — critically assessing credibility, bias, logic, and evidence quality of texts.

TABLE 1. Demographic Profile of Participants (N = 120)

Variable	Experimental Group (n = 60)	Control Group (n = 60)
Sex		
Male	22 (36.7%)	24 (40.0%)
Female	38 (63.3%)	36 (60.0%)
Year Level		
1st Year	20 (33.3%)	21 (35.0%)
2nd Year	22 (36.7%)	21 (35.0%)
3rd Year	18 (30.0%)	18 (30.0%)
Mean Age (± SD)	19.8 ± 1.42	20.1 ± 1.38
Primary Language		
Yakan	18 (30.0%)	17 (28.3%)
Chavacano	14 (23.3%)	15 (25.0%)
Filipino	16 (26.7%)	17 (28.3%)
Others	12 (20.0%)	11 (18.3%)

Weeks 1–4 each focused on one strategy in depth; weeks 5–6 integrated all four strategies using authentic BPA-relevant reading tasks (local ordinances, policy briefs, government audit reports). Sessions ran for 90 minutes per week. The control group received the conventional reading curriculum without explicit CRS instruction during the same period.

Data Collection Instruments

Reading Comprehension Test (RCT). A researcher-developed, 30-item multiple-choice test was constructed using authentic public administration texts (policy documents, governance literature, administrative directives). Items assessed literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and critical evaluation. Validated by a panel of five content and language experts. Split-half reliability: Spearman-Brown coefficient = .83 (pre-test) and .79 (post-test) [32].

Reading Motivation Questionnaire (RMQ). A 25-item Likert-scale instrument (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) adapted from the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire [33], adjusted for college-level BPA contexts. Measured intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy for reading, and reading for academic purposes. Cronbach's alpha = .87.

Data Analysis

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Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 26. The following procedures were employed:

- Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) for all RC and RM scores.
- Independent samples t-test to compare between-group RC and RM mean scores at pre- and post-intervention.
- Repeated measures ANOVA to assess within-group changes from pre- to post-intervention.
- Cohen's d to measure effect size (small = .20, medium = .50, large = .80) [34].

Significance level (alpha) was set at .05, using a two-tailed testing approach throughout.

IV. Results

Reading Comprehension: Between-Group Comparison

TABLE 2. Comparison of Pre- and Post-Intervention RC Scores of the Control and Experimental Groups Using an Independent Samples t-Test

Intervention Period	Group	N	M	SD	df	t-value	Sig.	Cohen's d
Pre-intervention	Control	60	18.43	3.62	118	.483	.630	—
	Experimental	60	18.97	3.78				
Post-intervention	Control	60	20.87	3.41	118	4.512	.001	.152
	Experimental	60	23.74	3.09				

Prior to the intervention, the control group (M = 18.43, SD = 3.62) and experimental group (M = 18.97, SD = 3.78) showed no statistically significant difference in RC ($t[118] = .483$, $p = .630$), confirming baseline equivalence. Following the intervention, the experimental group demonstrated a substantially higher post-intervention RC mean score (M = 23.74, SD = 3.09) compared to the control group (M = 20.87, SD = 3.41), a statistically significant difference ($t[118] = 4.512$, $p < .001$, $d = .152$) with a small-to-medium effect size. This indicates that CRS instruction produced meaningful improvement in reading comprehension relative to the conventional curriculum.

Reading Motivation: Between-Group Comparison

TABLE 3. Comparison of Pre- and Post-Intervention RM Scores of the Control and Experimental Groups Using an Independent Samples t-Test

Intervention Period	Group	N	M	SD	df	t-value	Sig.	Cohen's d
Pre-intervention	Control	60	3.02	.41	118	.091	.928	—
	Experimental	60	3.01	.38				
Post-intervention	Control	60	3.19	.35	118	3.741	.001	.112
	Experimental	60	3.34	.42				

Pre-intervention RM scores were virtually identical across both groups ($t[118] = .091$, $p = .928$). Post-intervention, the experimental group's RM mean (M = 3.34, SD = .42) was significantly higher than the control group's (M = 3.19, SD = .35), confirmed by $t(118) = 3.741$, $p = .001$, $d = .112$. Although the effect size was small, the statistically significant difference confirms that CRS meaningfully enhanced reading motivation among BPA students.

Within-Group Changes: Repeated Measures ANOVA

TABLE 4. Comparison of Pre- and Post-Intervention RC and RM Scores Within Groups Using Repeated Measures ANOVA

Group	Variable	Session	N	M	SD	df	t-value	Sig.	Cohen's d
Control	RC	Pre-intervention	60	18.43	3.62	60	2.581	.038	.031
		Post-intervention	60	20.87	3.41				
	RM	Pre-intervention	60	3.02	.41	60	3.312	.021	.078
		Post-intervention	60	3.19	.35				
Experimental	RC	Pre-intervention	60	18.97	3.78	55	7.214	.001	.180
		Post-intervention	60	23.74	3.09				
	RM	Pre-intervention	60	3.01	.38	60	8.923	.001	.198
		Post-intervention	60	3.34	.42				

For the control group, a small but statistically detectable RM increase was found ($t[60] = 3.312$, $p = .021$, $d = .078$), but the RC improvement was negligible in practical terms ($d = .031$), suggesting the conventional curriculum produced no meaningful comprehension gains. For the experimental group, both RC ($t[55] = 7.214$, $p < .001$, $d = .180$) and RM ($t[60] = 8.923$, $p < .001$, $d = .198$) improved significantly and substantially, confirming that the CRS intervention drove these gains.

Summary of Findings

TABLE 5. Summary of Statistical Findings Across All Research Questions

Research Question	Comparison	Statistic	Significant?
RQ1: Do CRS improve RC?	EG post vs. CG post	t(118) = 4.512, p < .001, d = .152	Yes
RQ2: Do CRS improve RM?	EG post vs. CG post	t(118) = 3.741, p = .001, d = .112	Yes
RQ3a: Within-group RC change (EG)	EG pre vs. EG post	t(55) = 7.214, p < .001, d = .180	Yes
RQ3b: Within-group RM change (EG)	EG pre vs. EG post	t(60) = 8.923, p < .001, d = .198	Yes
RQ3c: Within-group RC change (CG)	CG pre vs. CG post	t(60) = 2.581, p = .038, d = .031	Marginal
RQ3d: Within-group RM change (CG)	CG pre vs. CG post	t(60) = 3.312, p = .021, d = .078	Small

Note: EG = Experimental Group; CG = Control Group; RC = Reading Comprehension; RM = Reading Motivation

V. Discussion

CRS and Reading Comprehension

The findings confirm that CRS instruction significantly improved the reading comprehension of BPA students at BSC. The experimental group's post-intervention RC mean was 13.7% higher than the control group's, with a statistically significant difference and small-to-medium effect size ($d = .152$). These results parallel those of Gebremariam and Weldeyohannes [9], who reported a 14.3% RC difference between CRS-instructed and control students, and corroborate Vongkulluksn et al. [16], who demonstrated that structured CRS scaffolds significantly enhanced comprehension of informational texts in higher education. The negligible within-group effect for the control group ($d = .031$) contrasts sharply with the experimental group's moderate gain ($d = .180$), confirming that CRS—not mere reading exposure—drove the improvement.

The use of authentic BPA-relevant texts (policy documents, governance reports, legislative briefs) in the CRS intervention likely amplified its effectiveness. As Bangeni [27] emphasized, disciplinary novices' cognitive reading strategies are critically shaped by the language and content of the texts they encounter. Embedding CRS in the authentic discursive world of public administration gave students both the strategies and the contextual grounding necessary for

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meaningful comprehension growth. This contextual anchoring distinguishes the present study's approach from decontextualized reading interventions and aligns with calls for disciplinary literacy instruction in higher education [15].

CRS and Reading Motivation

CRS instruction also significantly enhanced reading motivation among BPA students. The post-intervention RM mean of the experimental group was significantly higher than that of the control group ($t[118] = 3.741$, $p = .001$, $d = .112$), and within-group analysis revealed notably stronger RM improvement in the experimental group ($d = .198$) compared to the control group ($d = .078$). These results align with SDT [23], [24]: the CRS intervention satisfied students' psychological needs for competence (through strategic tool-building), autonomy (through self-regulated reading), and relatedness (through collaborative text discussion). As Urhahne and Wijnia [26] argued, SDT-grounded interventions produce durable engagement improvements—a pattern reflected in the current findings.

The moderate control group RM gain ($d = .078$) suggests that any sustained reading engagement over six weeks yields some motivational benefit, though substantially less than that produced by explicit CRS instruction. Van der Sande et al.'s [21] meta-analysis corroborates this finding: directly delivered, explicit strategy-focused interventions consistently outperform passive exposure in fostering reading motivation. For BPA students at BSC—many of whom arrive at college with limited reading confidence—the motivation gains produced by CRS carry particular significance for long-term academic engagement and professional readiness.

Implications for BPA Instruction at Basilan State College

First, faculty in the BPA program—particularly those teaching Communication Skills, Administrative Law, and Research Methods—should integrate explicit CRS instruction into their courses, using authentic governance texts as reading material. Second, BSC's curriculum development office should consider a dedicated reading enrichment program for incoming BPA students, incorporating the four CRS modeled in this study across the first-year curriculum. Third, given Basilan's multilingual context, CRS instruction should be complemented by vocabulary development activities. As Li and Gan [36] found, reading motivation, self-regulated reading strategies, and vocabulary knowledge jointly predict reading comprehension, suggesting that multi-component interventions are most effective in multilingual higher education contexts.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations warrant acknowledgment. The convenience sampling of two intact BPA classes from a single institution limits generalizability beyond BSC. The six-week intervention, while sufficient to detect significant effects, may not capture the full trajectory of CRS-induced improvement; longitudinal studies across a full academic year are warranted. The study did not collect qualitative data; mixed-methods designs would yield richer insights into the mechanisms of CRS influence. Future studies should examine the differential effects of individual CRS using factorial designs, compare outcomes across BPA year levels, and extend the study to multiple institutions across BARMM.

VI. Conclusion

This study investigated the effects of Critical Reading Strategies on the reading comprehension and reading motivation of Bachelor of Public Administration students at Basilan State College. Using a quantitative quasi-experimental design over six weeks with 120 participants, the findings demonstrated that CRS instruction led to significantly greater improvements in both RC and RM compared to conventional reading instruction. The experimental group outperformed the control group on both outcome measures post-intervention, with practically meaningful effect sizes. Within-group analyses confirmed substantial improvements for the CRS group and only marginal gains for the control group.

These findings affirm the pedagogical value of integrating CRS into higher education reading instruction, particularly within public administration programs in geographically and linguistically complex settings such as Basilan Province. By equipping BPA students with structured strategies for engaging with complex governance texts, CRS instruction not only improves academic reading performance but cultivates motivated, critical reading dispositions essential for effective public service.

The study calls upon BSC faculty, curriculum developers, and educational policymakers in BARMM to institutionalize evidence-based reading strategy instruction across the BPA curriculum, ensuring that graduates are prepared not only to read governance texts but to engage with them critically, analytically, and with genuine motivational investment.

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