

# Understanding the role of set inductions in the facilitation of reading skills

URL	<a href="http://weko.wou.edu.my/?action=repository_uri&amp;item_id=454">http://weko.wou.edu.my/?action=repository_uri&amp;item_id=454</a>
-----	---





van Ek, J.A. (1976). *The threshold level for modern language learning in schools*. Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe.

## **Understanding the Role of Set Inductions in the Facilitation of Reading Skills**

Kam, Ling Ling Eunice<sup>1</sup>, Vighnarajah<sup>2\*</sup> & Chin, Yen Looi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>School of Education, Languages & Communications  
Wawasan Open University

<sup>3</sup>Centre for Languages  
Taylor's University

[eunice.kam.11@gmail.com](mailto:eunice.kam.11@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>

[iolasus@gmail.com](mailto:iolasus@gmail.com)<sup>2</sup>

[YenLooi.Chin@taylors.edu.my](mailto:YenLooi.Chin@taylors.edu.my)<sup>3</sup>

\* Corresponding author

### **Abstract**

For the Teaching of English as Second Language, learning and mastering the English language can be challenging, daunting and sometimes dull. From a skills-based approach in language teaching, the language is divided into the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Reading is the foundation of learning new knowledge and gaining new skills, therefore, the ultimate goal of reading is to achieve comprehension. In other words, reading is a meaning making process and this belief is supported by the constructivist view point that students in a reading class should be active participants in meaning making. Although this is desirable, achieving it can prove to be challenging. Hence, English teachers often attempt various strategies and methods to make English lessons interesting to promote students' motivation and active participation in the teaching and learning process. In this connection, this paper presents focused group interview findings from a six-week study conducted to examine the role of set induction in the promotion of motivation and facilitation of reading skills of the English language. The samples involved were two Intermediate level groups of foreign students who are weak in the

English language and undergoing the intensive English course at a private institution of higher learning in Malaysia. Findings indicate that appropriate selection and integration of set induction plays a critical role in motivating students to successfully attempt reading tasks as well as facilitating the necessary reading skills involved in this process.

## **Introduction**

Reading is a very important skill to have as the ability to read and ultimately comprehend is crucial to the success of a learner in any particular subjects or fields. Essentially, learners need to make meaning out of the text read. For ESL (English as Second Language) learners, reading can pose as a great challenge. Deciphering word after word and paragraph after paragraph can be unnerving for learners who may lack the proficiency in the English language. Spending time making sense of texts can be challenging, daunting and overwhelming at times as ESL learners may spend a lot of time pouring over the meaning of each word and yet struggling with the understanding of the entire context.

Moreover, students may face boredom in this meaning making process which will eventually lead to the lack of attention and motivation (Reading Rockets, 2012). Words itself do not provide gratification or excitement, and staring at words with effort to interpret the meaning, then subsequently learn from the printed texts is a mountainous task for many of these learners. In that respect, many learners will again find it difficult or not very motivated to read on further.

Studies have indicated that carefully designed lesson provide viable alternatives to overcome some of the common issues faced in the facilitation of reading skills of the English language (Wylie, 2009). She goes on to list some factors that affect reading such as students' fascination with reading, motivational factors and rehearsal of reading skills.

One of the important elements in designing an effective lesson is ensuring an engaging set induction to initiate the learning process and develop the proper mindset for the students to embrace the full content of the lesson (Dyson & Pine, 1996; Weiller, 1992). Set induction is the

preliminary part of a lesson where the instructor introduces the introduction to capture learners' attention. Hence, it is a preparatory stage to get learners ready and 'set' for the day's learning. It helps get learners in the right state of mind and mental readiness in preparatory to understand and learn the lesson for the day. Perrot (1982) argues that effective execution of set induction is able to direct students' attention to the topic of the day, and in this process, establish a connection to the students' prior knowledge and experiences. Moore (2005, p.137) agrees, indicating that "[t]he set induction is what you do at the outset of a lesson to get students' undivided attention, to arouse their interest, and to establish a conceptual framework for the information that follows."

Despite known benefits to effective planning and execution of set inductions, its particular potential to the promotion of motivation and facilitation of reading skills of the English language is still relatively lacking. Hence, this study was conducted in attempt to satisfy this gap in literature.

## **Methodology**

The overall aim of this study was to explore and understand the role of set induction in the promotion of motivation and facilitation of reading skills of the English language. The mixed-methods research design was adopted to achieve this aim. This research design was deemed the most suitable as it allowed the researchers to explore and understand the role of set induction from both the quantitative and qualitative aspects.

In the mixed-methods research design adopted, the qualitative and quantitative components complement each other, rather than obliging the conception and findings of one component to be dependent on the other (Creswell & Clark, 2007). In this way, the researchers are able to first explore and understand qualitatively how set induction plays a role in the promotion of motivation and facilitation of reading skills of the English language, and subsequently, autonomously establish empirical evidence to this role. With due reverence to research design adopted, this paper only attempts to address the qualitative findings of the study.

The participants involved in the study were two groups of foreign students undergoing the intensive English language course at Taylor's University. Under the Intensive English course, there are six levels of courses which provide training in English proficiency prior to entry into degree and post graduate degree courses of their choice. At each level, there are vital components to the course, namely grammar and writing, reading, speaking and listening. The student sample here is a group of students undergoing the reading component of the Intermediate level intensive English.

The mode of qualitative data collection employed was focused group interviews. Eight students were selected for two sessions of interviews; the first group consisted of five students while the second group consisted of three students. On average, each group interview lasted for forty minutes. In general, the questions asked during the interviews were related to the set inductions used during their lessons. Among others, the participants were enquired of their perception on the set induction usage, and how it assisted them in the learning process, specifically in terms of motivation and facilitation of reading skills. Since these participants were generally weak in effectively communicating their thoughts in English, the researchers asked simple, structured questions with easy vocabulary that fundamentally aims to explore and understand the role of set induction in the promotion of motivation and facilitation of reading skills of the English language.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The following discussion presents only the qualitative findings transpired from this study. While this paper does not address a detailed account of the study, several factors have been chosen that are critical to the role of set induction examined in this study. These factors were mainly the recurring themes during the qualitative analysis.

It was apparent from the study that set induction played more than just a complementing role in the facilitation of the reading skills. Apart from being the key factor that prepares the students to

engage in the learning process, set induction, as observed from this study, also initiates and explains the reading activity to the comprehension and proficiency level of the students. In every reading lesson, the students were provided with a piece of reading activity. They would read and answer comprehension questions based on the text read. These reading activities were usually obtained from a reference book identified by the Centre for Languages, Taylor's University to be used in the reading class. However, instructors were given the flexibility to use other reading materials that match students' level of proficiency.

Prior to the start of each reading lesson, these students were exposed to a variety of set inductions. These set inductions were carefully and deliberately selected to coincide with the theme of the reading activity for the day. Other times, set inductions were selected based on the cultural background of the students, their previous knowledge and the personalities of the students. All these were done with the intent that students were able to relate to these elements. Among the other set inductions used in this study were skit, Coca-Cola drink, video clips, pictures, and objects like toys for miming, Japanese Geisha doll, tennis ball, football, football jerseys and last but not least, the iPad.

Findings of the interviews clearly indicate that the set inductions used possessed tremendous potential in stimulating interest and gaining students' attention during the lesson. Citing the example of video clips, the students said that it made them interested in facing the reading challenge of the day. This indirectly helped them to focus and pay attention to what is to come during the reading, comprehension and discussion time. Observations also indicate that students were definitely attentive during the lessons which led to improved facilitation of their learning and knowledge-acquiring process. This is due to the fact that the set inductions were engaging to such extent that it allowed the students to feel relaxed and not so stressed in participating in the learning process.

Oman (2001) argues that students are usually more motivated to learn further when they are interested, or interest is established, in the lesson delivered. No doubt, the variety of set inductions used in the classroom has sparked a lot of interest in the lessons and students paid

great attention to what were presented to them. It is this drive to learn that further promotes and enhances the intrinsic motivation to partake actively in the teaching and learning process.

Sponsorship of intrinsic motivation was another finding that transpired during the qualitative analysis process. Students revealed that the set inductions used helped increase their level of intrinsic motivation to learn more as they were very enthused by the set inductions introduced by the instructor. The instructor attempted many different sets inductions to sustain this level of motivation. Responding to the effort, students indicated that they were very happy to see many different set inductions used in the classroom. For instance, one of the students mentioned that the different types of set inductions kept him motivated during the lessons. Hence, when instructors make effort in preparing a lesson, and in this context, coming up with various set inductions to kick start the reading pursuit of the day, students were more motivated and able to learn more effectively.

This was a common sight particularly when different varieties of set inductions were introduced. When the set inductions for the lesson consist of iPad, video clips and PowerPoint slides, any untrained observer can notice how the students' eyes were not only riveted to the projector screen, but they were also actively asking questions or making guesses of how the set induction relates to the reading activity for the day. For instance, to introduce students to the character and life of Sherlock Holmes, the instructor, using PowerPoint slides on a laptop computer, showed a picture of the character's silhouette and address at 221B, Baker Street to encourage students to spend some time discussing about this character and relating all these to their pre-knowledge. This was eventually tied-in with the use of Sherlock Holmes books towards the end of the lesson by establishing a connection to students' learning. The books were shown to students in physical book format and also e-book format via the iPad, to promote further reading.

These findings concur with Oman's (2001) claim that not all students are intrinsically motivated. He further argues that learning becomes efficient when the teacher shows enthusiasm towards a lesson, and because of this enthusiasm shown by the teacher, the students will also be encouraged to learn more.

The study also found that the set inductions used have increased student-teacher interaction in the classroom. For instance, when the reading activity for the day was “Romeo and Juliet”, the instructor directed an unrehearsed skit, while the students had to act as instructed on the spot. There were interesting tools used in the skit, such as a three and a half feet long wooden sword, a two and a half feet long plastic sword, a home-made dagger, a water bottle to represent poison and different types of hats to accentuate the different characters of the story.

The skit improved students-teacher interactions that further bonded the students and instructor. That is, the instructor chose to be involved in the skit rather than to stand and dictate the teaching in the classroom. She made sure the students said their lines, put on their hats, brought them the props while they were acting the scenes in the story. Although the skit may have appeared somewhat silly and hilarious, it was obvious that the presence of the instructor was greatly felt in their midst, and there was a continuously growing proximity and understanding between teacher and students. Due to the positive interactions between student-teacher, a good student-teacher relationship was established. A good student-teacher relationship had been said to help in students’ learning as it has been distinguished as emotional support because it reflects students’ perception of the teacher possessing characteristics such as “caring, friendliness, understanding, dedication, and dependability” (Ryan & Patrick, 2001, p. 440). Moreover, this added to the fun the students experienced because the skit was impromptu and unrehearsed.

## **Conclusion**

Through the study, it was apparent that set induction plays a crucial role in the promotion of motivation and facilitation of reading skills of the English language. Findings from focused group interviews with students revealed that the set inductions have helped enhanced their motivation and reading skills. Among others, researchers found a higher level of attention gained during lessons and improved relationship between students and teacher. To date, very few research have been done on the role of set induction in facilitating reading skills. With this, it is



hoped that this study have generated some level of interest in the many potentials of set induction, particularly to the rehearsal of reading skills of the English language.

## References

Creswell, J. & Clark, P. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dyson, B. & Pine, S. (1996). Start and end class right. *Strategies*, 9(6), 5-9.

Moore, K. D. (2005). *Effective instructional strategies: From theory to practice*. USA: Sage Publications.

Oman, M. D. (2001). Using anticipatory set demonstrations to promote interest in science: An investigation into an 8th grade integrated science classroom. Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Wisconsin – River Falls, WI.

Perrot, E. (1982). *Effective teaching: a practical guide to improving your teaching*. New York: Longman.

Reading Rockets (2012). Target the problem: Other sources of reading difficulty. Accessed 16 September 2012 from <http://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/otherissues/>

Ryan, A. M., & Patrick, H. (2001). The classroom social environment and changes in adolescents' motivation and engagement during middle school. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38, 437-460.

Weiller, K. H. (1992). Successful learning = Clear objectives. *Strategies*, 5(5), 5-8.

Wylie, D. (2009). Environmental factors that affect seventh grade readers': motivations, attitudes, opinions, experiences, and gender. Unpublished Masters Thesis. Accessed 28 August 2012 from [http://dspace.uta.edu/bitstream/handle/10106/1999/Wylie\\_uta\\_2502M\\_10408.pdf?sequence=1](http://dspace.uta.edu/bitstream/handle/10106/1999/Wylie_uta_2502M_10408.pdf?sequence=1)