

## Using Active, Creative, Effective and Joyful (ACEJ) Learning Strategies toward English Achievement and their Behavioural Changes among Primary School Students

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### Abstract

*This paper presents a study that experiments the ACEJ Language learning Strategies focusing on its effects toward students' English language achievement and their behavioural changes. Data is collected through a quantitative and qualitative method. A quasi-experimental approach is adopted with a pre-post-test analysis. A total of 181 year-four students of Elementary Schools in Riau province and three teachers were involved as the participants of the study. The quantitative data showed significant differences on students' English language achievement scores between experimental and control groups through ACEJ learning. The qualitative data on the other hand, dealt with teachers' perception towards students' behavioural changes during the process of the treatment of LLS through Active, creative, Effective and Joyful learning.*

**Keywords:** Language learning Strategies (LLS), active, creative, effective and joyful (ACEJ) learning, English language achievement, and behavioral change.

### 1. Introduction

Several factors need considerable attention in the learning of a foreign language among learners and especially so for primary school children. Undoubtedly, these learners will engage learning strategies that will assist them in acquiring the targeted language which often they themselves are unaware of. Students' learning behaviour whether positive or negative is often influenced by affective factors such as their attitude or motivation in learning the subject matter.

The fundamental goal of English language at primary schooling is to implant basic communicative competence in receptive and productive skills in English and to have positive attitude and motivation to learn English. Zainil (2005) states, that more students now are less successful to grasp the basic language skills. In addition, they are more conscious of their clarity, fluency and appropriateness when speaking. This is added on with their awareness of their lack of knowledge in the accurate use of grammar and vocabulary.

Dealing with intellectual development of six-to twelve-year-old children is of what Piaget (1972) referred to as "concrete operation," we need to remember their limitations. Brown (2001) claimed that some rules of thumb for the classroom: don't explain grammar using terms like "present progressive" and rules stated in abstract terms and more difficult concepts or patterns. In reality, what is implemented in teaching and learning process, more English teachers teach abstract things, explain grammar explicitly and present more difficult concepts or patterns. Consequently, pupils become more unmotivated and frustrated to learn English. This causes hindrances to grasp English language properly.

### 2. The Context

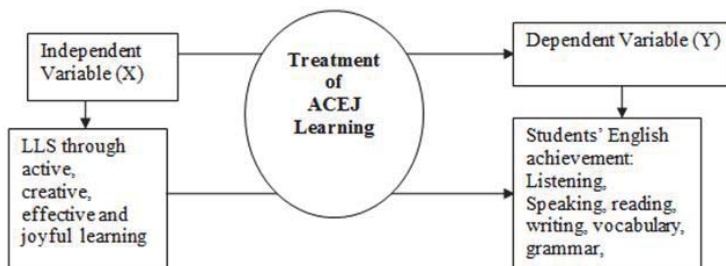
In Indonesian basic education, Active, Creative, Effective and Joyful learning or in Indonesian term 'PAKEM' which is the acronym for 'Pembelajaran Aktif, Kreatif, Efektif and Menyenangkan (in the local language)' is the term which is usually applied to active learning in primary schools. The term CTL (Contextual Teaching and Learning) in junior secondary schools is commonly applied (Cannon & Arlianti, 2008). Based on our observation on teaching English at primary school level in Riau province, it is discovered that more students are not motivated and interested in learning English. Many English teachers are unable to create various activities in teaching and learning process. They implement teacher-centered in the teaching and learning process. This has led to students to feel bored and dislike towards learning English. Some of the students possess negative attitude toward English and low motivation and feel self-esteem so they are

reluctant to initiate speaking and fail to achieve better achievement.

Pertinent to individual differences, some students might use language learning strategies different from one another. Having various styles of learning, the students might use different language learning strategies. This may depend on whether the learners are more attentive and affective in the way they learn or otherwise where students who are unmotivated to learn will pay no attention to the ways they actually learn.

Due to those phenomena employed by the learners at primary schools in Riau province, some questions are needed to be addressed. How do the learners cope with in order to achieve the ultimate goal of English language? How should the teachers apply language learning strategies to their pupils in teaching English? How do the teachers implant in them to have positive attitude in learning English. How do the teachers make them more motivated, efficient and independent language learners? How do the teachers create various authentic and meaningful activities to their pupils? How do the pupils overcome the problems dealing with English achievement? And how are the language learning strategies employed in learning English?

The previous phenomena indicated that English teachers did not implement the concepts of classroom techniques of communicative language teaching very well yet, as well as the concepts or theories on how to teach English to the children in the early level of primary school. To practice the concepts, the teachers should understand them and apply the strategies accorded to the children's needs. The interconnections among the theories of language learning strategies through active, creative, effective and joyful learning toward students' attitude, motivation and English language achievement forms the basis for adopting such a method to address the language teaching and learning problems for the students. This is represented in the theoretical framework as shown in the figure below.



**Figure 1.0:** The Treatment of ACEJ Learning

Figure 1.0 shows how the use of LLS through active, creative, effective and joyful learning facilitate the learners to acquire positive attitude and to be motivated and to be able to master the listening, reading, and writing skills. This does not exclude their ability to apply the correct vocabulary and grammar rules.

The study aims to evaluate the effects of language learning strategies through active, creative, effective and joyful learning toward students' English language achievement as well as their behavioural changes after conducting a quasi-experimental research for four months at primary schools in Riau province. The study sets its objectives:

- to determine the difference of the students' English pre-test mastery between experimental groups and control groups.
- to determine the difference of the students' English post-test achievement between experimental groups and control groups.
- to determine the difference of the students' English achievement of pre-test and post-test composite scores of experimental groups.
- to explore teachers' perceptions on the effects of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) through Active, Creative, Effective and Joyful (ACEJ) learning towards students' behavioral changes and their English language achievement

The research questions are presented as follows:

- What are the effects of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) through Active, Creative, Effective and Joyful (ACEJ) learning towards students' English language achievement?
- How are the teachers' perceptions on the effects of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) through Active, Creative, Effective and Joyful (ACEJ) learning towards students' behavioural changes and their English language achievement?

### 3. Materials and Methods

A quasi-experimental approach is adopted with a pre-post-test analysis. A total of 181 year-four students of Elementary Schools in Riau province and three teachers were involved as the participants of the study. The quantitative data showed significant differences on students' English language achievement scores between experimental and control groups through ACEJ learning. The qualitative data on the other hand, dealt with teachers' perception towards students' behavioural changes during the process of the treatment of LLS through Active, creative, Effective and Joyful learning.

This design was selected for this study due to the following factors: (a) the administrative constraints on random selection of selected primary schools (b) based on the real condition, it is not realistic to conduct the study in true experimental design due to the complexity of human behavior and language behavior, and the difficulty of defining various variables involved in language learning ; quasi-experimental design can reflect what happens in the real life settings without any disruption in the educational set-up; therefore, this eliminates 'artificially' existing in true experiments and also shows that ecological validity of such designs is strong (c) the results of quasi-experimental research, as Bryman (2001) argues, is still 'compelling' and particularly prominent in evaluation research studies; and (d) the use of intact classes in quasi-experimental designs could reduce the threat of Hawthorne effect that can often result when subjects are randomly selected and assigned to conditions for the cooperative lesson periods.

### 4. Research Findings

#### 4.1 Quantitative Findings

Table 1 presents the mean scores of pre-test results for both experimental and control groups. It shows that listening mean score (6.45) is the highest one among five sub-skills pre-test mastery of experimental group, while reading (5.57) is the highest one for the control group. Overall mean scores of pre-test results between experimental group and control group are almost similar 5.43: 5.03

**Table 1.** Mean Scores of Pre-test Results for both Experimental and Control Groups

	EG PRE	CG PRE
Listening	6.45	5.40
Reading	5.90	5.57
Writing	4.94	5.00
Vocabulary	5.02	4.71
Grammar	4.83	4.47
Overall	5.43	5.03

Table 2.0 on the other hand, indicates that there were no significant differences of students' English language post-test mean scores between experimental group and control group.

**Table 2:** Mean Scores of Post-test Results for both Experimental and Control Groups

	EG POST	CG POST
Listening	7.34	6.73
Reading	7.58	6.55
Writing	7.43	6.35
Vocabulary	7.61	6.43
Grammar	7.15	6.11
Overall	7.55	6.43

The overall mean scores of pre-test results between experimental group and control group show significant difference 7.55: 6.43 It can be concluded that students' English mastery for both experimental and control groups shows significant difference after the treatment of ACEJ language learning strategies. Table 4.0 shows the mean scores of pre-test and post-test results of experimental groups.

**Table 4:** Mean Scores of Pre-test and Post-test Results of Experimental Groups

	PRE EG	POST EG
Listening	5.82	7.97
Reading	5.90	7.58
Writing	4.94	7.43
Vocabulary	5.02	7.61
Grammar	4.83	7.15
Overall	5.30	7.55

The overall mean scores of pre-test and post-test results of experimental groups show significant difference 5.30 : 7.55 It can be determined that overall mean scores of experimental groups increase significantly (2.25).

## 4.2 Qualitative Findings

In the qualitative method, three teacher participants of intact schools were interviewed. They described the students at the beginning of the treatment to be generally shy, reluctant to talk, passive, confused, lack of motivation and low self-esteem. The following excerpts highlighted the statements conveyed by the three participants.

*"...most of students.....they were shy...they reluctant to talk ... did not want to talk " (T1)*

*"...more students were surprised .....they were so passive and reluctant to talk..... they were rather confused to learn English" (T2)*

*".....they were so passive and confused in learning English. ...." (T3)*

Another issue conveyed by the participants was other affective factors. Two teachers described that the students displayed lack of motivation and were low as well as low self-esteem as stated at the excerpts below.

*"..... they had lack of motivation to study..... they were not so interested in learning English" (T1)*

*"... they had low self-esteem when they talked"*

Two teachers described that the situation was temporary and it gradually changed. The participants' statements were highlighted as follow.

*"...But then, .... when I told them, "Let's sing English"...they are very enthusias as... they seem so happy and enjoy to sing a song. Therefore, when I ask them to play games, they were very happy and, ....and enjoy". (T1)*

*"..Then, .. they seem so happy when I invite them to sing a song and play games". (T3)*

All participants of the interview shared the same opinion in terms of ACEJ learning towards students' affective factors that could bring about the students' behavioral changes from low response to high response, from having low motivation to high one, from being low self-esteem to better one, and from low anxiety to better one. It showed that using ACEJ learning would manage to change the students' their affective factors to positive ones.

## 5. Discussion

Findings of the study illustrated that adopting language learning strategies through active, creative, effective and joyful learning had significant effects on the students' English language achievement after conducting 12 meetings of treatment toward the students of primary schools in Riau province of Indonesia. The interview sessions with the teachers also supported that the use of LLS through ACEJ learning gave positive effects on the students' behavioural changes.

### 5.1 Effects of LLS through ACEJ learning on students' English language achievement

This analysis showed that there were significant effects on the students' overall English language achievement and five sub-scales of listening, reading, writing, and vocabulary and grammar sub-skills as measured by the English language achievement test. Prior to the treatment, both the experimental and control groups indicated low scores of English language mastery.

## 5.2 Teachers' perceptions of LLS through ACEJ learning towards students' behavioural changes

All teachers agreed that the students lacked confidence, shy, confused and low motivation in learning English especially at the beginning of the treatment. These conditions and situations are as such as the students were used in teacher-centred learning, the teacher was everything and the teacher was only active during teaching and learning process. However, all of them agreed that situation was temporary and that they would be familiar with various activities like singing songs, language games, action and function activities. Their behaviour became more positive and they gradually became more confident, active, creative and joyful during the teaching and learning process.

## 6. Conclusion

ACEJ learning is one learning strategy that is indirectly an approach that maximises the learning outcomes to achieve the learning objectives more effectively and more efficiently in accordance with students' ability. The research findings of language learning strategies through ACEJ learning highlight the positive and significant effects on students' English language achievement and their behaviour changes at primary school level. As a learning strategy, ACEJ learning shows that it is able to improve the students' capability to achieve the desired learning objective more effectively and efficiently. It is also highlighted that ACEJ learning shows significant effects to improve the students' behaviour to positive ones. In addition, teachers responded positively when asked of their perceptions of the implementation of ACEJ learning in their English classes.

The ACEJ approach has illustrated a great change to students' affective factor. ACEJ learning contributes more benefits to improve students; motivation, attitude, interest and self-esteem which can be used to improve their English language achievement and behavioural changes. Students like and enjoy English class very much because of the various activities provided in the English class. This affirms that the ACEJ learning could be implemented in ELT at primary schools that offer extensive benefits. Teachers should formally employ this method in their classroom practices most significantly in teaching English as a foreign language at primary school level.

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