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Implementing the Law of Readiness in English Language Learning: A Strategy to Enhance Student Engagement

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Abstrak: This study aims to describe methods for developing students' learning readiness in English language instruction. The findings demonstrate that a communicative approach, collaborative singing activities as an introduction to English, and educational games can effectively foster students' readiness to engage in English language learning. The study also indicates that repeated patterns of activities contribute to shaping students' positive perceptions of English language learning as an enjoyable learning experience.

Kata Kunci: Law of Readness, English Language; Learning

A. Introduction

Nana Sayodih Sukmadinata (2009) explains that learning is a mental process manifested through various forms of behavior, both physical-motor and psychological. She further explains that learning activities involve continuous interactions between physical-motor activities and psychological activities. Although these two dimensions (physical and psychological) can be distinguished, they cannot be clearly separated.¹ Physical-motor activities

¹ Nana Sayodih Sukmadinata, "Kurikulum dan Pembelajaran", in: Mohammad Ali, *Ilmu dan Aplikasi Pendidikan, Buku II: Ilmu Pendidikan Praktis*, (Bandung: PT. Imperial Bhakti Utama, pp.: 124

include bodily and motor skills, whereas psychological activities encompass intellectual, socio-emotional, attitudinal and affective activities, as well as values. A learning activity may be characterized as involving predominantly physical-motor activities rather than psychological activities, or vice versa, with psychological activities being more dominant than physical activities. However, it is not possible for one dimension to operate independently while the other is entirely absent in a learning activity.

Fathurrohman and Sulistyorini (2012) explain that, fundamentally, learning is a process whose ultimate purpose is to bring about change.² The primary focus of learning is not on who teaches, where learning takes place, or what is taught, but rather on the outcomes of the learning process, namely the changes that occur after an individual engages in learning activities.³ Learning is an active process and a process of realizing and responding to all situations surrounding the individual. It is a goal-oriented process of acting based on various experiences. The learning process concerns how an individual's behavior can be transformed. Learning is also a process of seeing, observing, and understanding something.⁴ Nana Sayodih Sukmadinata (2009) explains that learning or instruction is essentially an activity in which teachers or lecturers create situations that enable students to learn. She further explains that the primary objective of instruction is to facilitate students' learning.⁵ Furthermore, instruction is an activity intended to develop cognitive abilities (thinking), affective capacities (attitudes), and psychomotor abilities (skills), all of which are developed simultaneously through the acquisition of learning experiences.⁶

Furthermore, Djudju Sudjana (2009) explains that, as a product, learning behavior may manifest in various forms. Taxonomically, the types and levels of learning include: (1) learning how to know; (2) learning how to do; (3) learning how to learn, relearn, or unlearn; (4) learning how to solve problems; (5) learning to live together; and (6) learning to be.⁷ He further explains that learning activities may take the form of guidance, information delivery, and training. He also emphasizes that educators are not the sole source of learning; therefore, learners can also learn from mass media, successful resource persons, and their own experiences as well as those of others.⁸

² Muhammad Fathurrohman & Sulistyorini, *Belajar dan Pembelajaran: Meningkatkan Mutu Pembelajaran Sesuai Standar Nasional*, (Yogyakarta: Teras, 2012), pp: 7

³ *Ibid.*, pp: 8

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp: 10

⁵ Nana Sayodih Sukmadinata, *Op. Cit.*

⁶ Muhammaf Fathurrohman & Sulistyorini, *Op. Cit.*, pp: 8

⁷ Djudju Sudjana, "Andragogi Praktis", in: Mohammad Ali, *Ilmu dan Aplikasi Pendidikan, Buku II: Ilmu Pendidikan Praktis*, (Bandung: PT. Imperial Bhakti Utama, 2009), pp: 7

⁸ *Ibid.*

Based on the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that learning is a mental activity manifested through changes toward a better state. These changes are reflected in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Meanwhile, instruction is the effort made by educators to create a learning environment for learners.

Another important aspect that needs to be considered in this regard is that, in a learning activity, students must be in a state of readiness to learn. Learning activities will not take place effectively, and learning objectives will not be achieved, if students are not yet in a condition in which they are ready to engage in the learning process. In this context, the behaviorist theorist Edward L. Thorndike proposed several laws of learning, one of which is the Law of Readiness. In his book *Educational Psychology*, Thorndike formulated three major laws of learning. Thorndike explains as follows:

These original human tendencies include also certain ones whereby modifiability or learning itself is possible. These are best thought of in the form of the three laws of **Readiness**, **Exercise**, and **Effect**. **The Law of Readiness** is: When any conduction unit is in readiness to conduct, for it to do so is satisfying. When any conduction unit is not in readiness to conduct, for it to conduct is annoying. When any conduction unit is in readiness to conduct, for it not to do so is annoying. By a satisfying state of affairs is meant one which the animal does nothing to avoid, often doing things which maintain or renew it. By an annoying state of affairs is meant one which the animal does nothing to preserve, often doing things which put an end to it.

....

The Law of Exercise comprises the laws of Use and Disuse. The Law of Use is: When a modifiable connection is made between a situation and a response, that connection's strength is, other things being equal, increased. By the strength of a connection is meant roughly the probability that the connection will be made when the situation recurs. Greater probability that a connection will be made means a greater probability for the same time, or an equal probability, but for a longer time....

The Law of Effect is when a modifiable connection between a situation and a response is made and is accompanied or followed by a satisfying state of affairs, that connection's strength is increased:

When made and accompanied or followed by an annoying state of affairs, its strength is decreased.⁹

Indeed, several criticisms have been directed toward behaviorists because their research subjects were animals. However, from a behavioral perspective, it is possible to accept the findings observed in animals and consider their applicability to human behavior. In our everyday activities, whether consciously or unconsciously, we often draw parallels between our own behavior and that of animals and make comparisons between them. For example, when we see a dog stranded in the rain and feel compassion toward it and subsequently help it, we are, in fact, comparing our perception of the animal's possible feelings with what we might feel if we were in a similar situation.

Another aspect that needs to be considered is the conditioning of the classroom environment to create an appropriate learning situation. At the initial stage, the teacher's primary task is to organize and condition the classroom so that students are ready to engage in the learning process. Kholis (2023) explains that learning is essentially a classroom management activity. The teacher is fundamentally the person responsible for carrying out this management. Thus, instruction can be understood as a classroom management process aimed at facilitating the realization of effective learning activities.¹⁰ The selection of a learning method or instructional approach, whether teacher-centered or student-centered, lies along a continuum and has an interval nature as part of classroom management activities aimed at creating conducive learning conditions.¹¹

All of these activities, including instructional activities, the development of students' learning readiness, and classroom organization, require specific skills on the part of educators. This article discusses how classroom management is implemented in English language instruction to foster students' learning readiness and create a conducive classroom environment for the learning process to take place.

One important aspect that needs to be considered in relation to this study is, first, that the research was conducted with Indonesian students as the research subjects, for whom English functions as a foreign language, since they are not native speakers of the language. English may also be regarded as a third language, alongside their respective regional languages as their mother tongues and Indonesian as the national language.

Second, the subjects of this study were students living within a pesantren environment. They were all situated in relatively similar conditions. Within the

⁹ Edward L. Thorndike, *Educational psychology*, (New York: Lemcke & Buechner, 1903)

¹⁰ R. Ahmad Nur Kholis, "Pemebelajaran Sebagai Pengelolaan Kelas". *Paper*. (Malang: STAI Nahdlatul Ulama (STAINU) Malang, 2023)

¹¹ *Ibid.*

pesantren setting, their daily lives are characterized by schedules for meals and activities that are organized and regulated according to a relatively uniform system of arrangements (see Kholis (2022) on pesantren as an educational institution based on experimentation).¹² This context is important to acknowledge, particularly because research conducted in different contexts may potentially produce different findings.

B. Research Method

This study was primarily qualitative research employing a case study approach. However, some data were collected through surveys and the distribution of closed-ended questions to students. The research was conducted during the learning activities of Grade 7, Grade 8, and Grade 9 students at a junior secondary education institution. Data obtained from the survey were tabulated using Microsoft Excel and subsequently analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques.

C. Discussion

1. Kegiatan Pembuka Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris

Based on the interview conducted with an English teacher at an Islamic junior secondary school (Madrasah Tsanawiyah), the teacher explained that her/his instructional practice almost always begins with the following activities. First, the teacher initiates the lesson by asking the students about their well-being in English. Second, the students participate in a group singing activity conducted in English. Third, the teacher introduces the lesson through an educational game that actively engages the students. Fourth, the teacher proceeds to the development of the learning activities according to the planned instructional pattern.¹³ (Figure 1)

¹² R. Ahmad Nur Kholis, *Pesantren sebagai Lembaga Pendidikan Berbasis Eksperimentasi*, (in: <https://r-ahmadnurkholis.blogspot.com/2022/03/pesantren-sebagai-lembaga-pendidikan.html>; 2022; dikases pada: 15/01/2026; 05:50)

¹³ Conversation 01.01 (10/01/2026; 16:30)

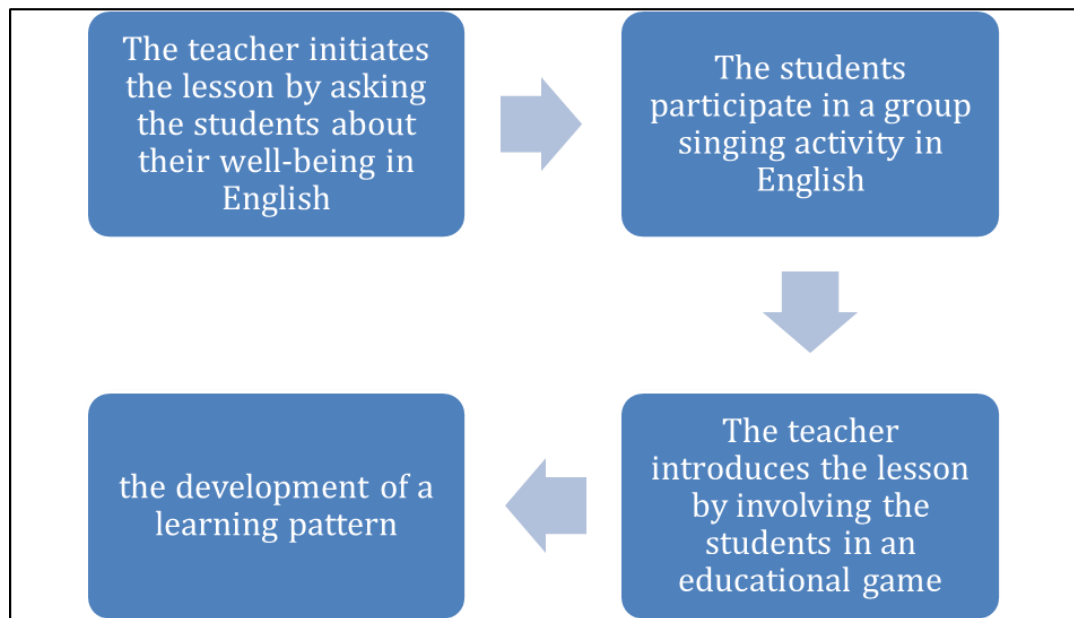


Figure 1
The Process of Opening an English Language Learning Session

The following sections provide a detailed explanation of each of these points:

a. The teacher initiates the lesson by asking the students about their well-being in English

Based on the interview with the English teacher, it was found that the lesson was initiated by asking students about their well-being in English. The teacher typically began with simple and general questions, as illustrated in the following exchange:

Teacher : "How are you today?"
 Student : "I am fine. And you?"
 Teacher : "I am fine too."

During this activity, the teacher simultaneously observed the students' behavior and body language in the classroom. Students displayed varying levels of readiness and engagement. Some appeared enthusiastic, energetic, and prepared to participate in the lesson, while others seemed tired, less motivated, or somewhat gloomy. When encountering students who appeared less enthusiastic, the teacher continued the interaction by asking additional questions, such as:

Teacher : "Have you had breakfast?"
 Student : "No, Sir."
 Teacher : "Why haven't you eaten yet? Wasn't the food at the dormitory prepared early this morning?"

Questions such as these enabled the teacher to gain insight into the students' daily challenges and circumstances. Students' responses were simultaneously used to identify potential problems they might be experiencing. At the same time, this interaction served as a means for the teacher to demonstrate concern and attentiveness toward the students' personal conditions and experiences.

Within the context of language learning, these questions were asked in English. The teacher wrote the questions on the board as language practice materials and subsequently provided translations when necessary. Similarly, students' responses, which were often expressed in Indonesian, were recorded on the board and collaboratively translated into English. This process allowed students to practice vocabulary, sentence construction, and conversational expressions in a meaningful context.

The students' responses during these opening conversations varied considerably. Some students answered confidently and promptly, whereas others responded hesitantly or felt embarrassed to speak. In such cases, the teacher consistently encouraged participation through positive attitudes, supportive body language, and an enthusiastic demeanor. These efforts helped motivate students to answer the questions without fear or hesitation. Over the course of several meetings, the number of students who appeared reluctant or shy gradually decreased, and students became increasingly willing to participate in classroom interactions.

Based on the data presented above, several important implications can be identified from this lesson-opening practice. In addition to its primary function of developing students' language skills through repetition and habituation, the activity also reflects a deeper level of teacher care and attention toward students. As a result, students develop a stronger sense of being valued and supported by their teacher. In the long term, such an approach can contribute to increased student enthusiasm, engagement, and motivation in the learning process.

b. The students participate in a group singing activity in English

At this stage, the teacher invites the students to sing together. This activity aims to create a joyful learning atmosphere in the classroom. From the perspective of language learning, the songs selected are popular English-language children's songs, such as *Ten Little Indians* and similar songs. One of the songs used in the learning activity is as follows:

One little, two little, three little Indians,
Four little, five little, six little Indians,
Seven little, eight little, nine little Indians,
Ten little Indian boys.

Ten little, nine little, eight little Indians,
Seven little, six little, five little Indians,

Four little, three little, two little Indians,
One little Indian boy.

While singing, the teacher observes the students' lip movements to ensure that they actively participate in pronouncing the words and demonstrate enthusiasm, while also paying attention to the accuracy of their pronunciation. In the context of foreign language learning, the song provides an enjoyable learning experience for the students while simultaneously giving them an opportunity to practice translating simple English expressions. The consideration of English as a foreign language is therefore particularly relevant in this activity.

From a broader educational perspective, this activity, together with the preceding activity, serves to gradually attract the students' attention and focus toward the learning environment before the main lesson is delivered. Once the students become comfortable with the classroom atmosphere and the classroom environment becomes conducive to learning, their condition naturally indicates their readiness to engage in the learning process.

This pattern is consistent with the view expressed by T. W. Moore (1982), who argues that one stage builds upon and presupposes the preceding stage. Although Moore (1982) discusses this principle within the context of general theories of education, it is coherent with the process observed in this study. Indeed, Moore (1982) also suggests that, in its most concrete form, teachers' classroom activities contribute to the construction and development of general educational theory.¹⁴

c. The teacher introduces the lesson by involving the students in an educational game

At the next stage, once the classroom environment has become conducive to learning, the class can be considered ready to engage in the learning process. Thorndike's Law of Readiness is evident at this stage, which suggests that learning can take place effectively when students are in a state of readiness to learn. Under such conditions, the learning process is more likely to proceed effectively and the intended learning objectives can be achieved.

Interestingly, under these conditions, the teacher introduces the learning material in a subtle manner, gradually guiding the students toward the lesson content. The method employed is the *Hot Potato* game, which is conducted according to the following procedure:¹⁵

- Take a small object, such as an eraser.

¹⁴ See: TW. Moore, *Philosophy of Education: An Introduction*, (London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 1982)

¹⁵ *ESL Answering Questions Gamse: Hot Potato*, (in: Teach This Activities, Games & Worksheets, <https://www.teach-this.com/images/games/hot-potato.pdf>, diakses tanggal: 16/01/2026; 05:42)

- Hand the object to one of the students and then turn around, facing away from the students.
- Ask the students to pass the object around while singing a song together.
- After a few seconds have passed, shout, "Stop!"
- The student holding the object at that moment must answer a question that you have prepared or construct a sentence according to the given requirements.
- If the student answers the question or constructs the sentence correctly, they receive one point.
- If not, the game continues.
- Once a question has been answered or a sentence has been correctly constructed, repeat the process.
- Continue the game until all the questions have been answered or all the sentence-construction tasks have been completed.
- The student with the most points at the end of the game is declared the winner.

Pada tahap ketiga proses ini, lagu yang dinyanyikan bersama adalah lagu anak dalam Bahasa Inggris. Pada tahap kelima proses ini, pertanyaan atau kalimat yang dibuat peserta didik adalah menyesuaikan ketentuan dalam materi pembelajaran. Dalam proses ini, peserta didik diharapkan dapat menginternalisasi materi pelajaran dalam suasana yang santai dan menyenangkan. Harapannya adalah bahwa disamping pembelajaran terasampaikan secara efektif, suasana kelas tidak terlalu membosankan bagi mereka.

d. The development of a learning pattern

In practice, after several learning sessions following the same pattern, the students gradually internalized the perception that learning English was enjoyable. This finding will be further demonstrated in the discussion that follows. However, this process clearly resulted from the repeated implementation of the same instructional pattern by the teacher. This repetition also had implications for the students' readiness to learn, as they became increasingly easy to engage and prepare for learning in subsequent meetings. In graphical form, this pattern is illustrated in Figure 2 below:

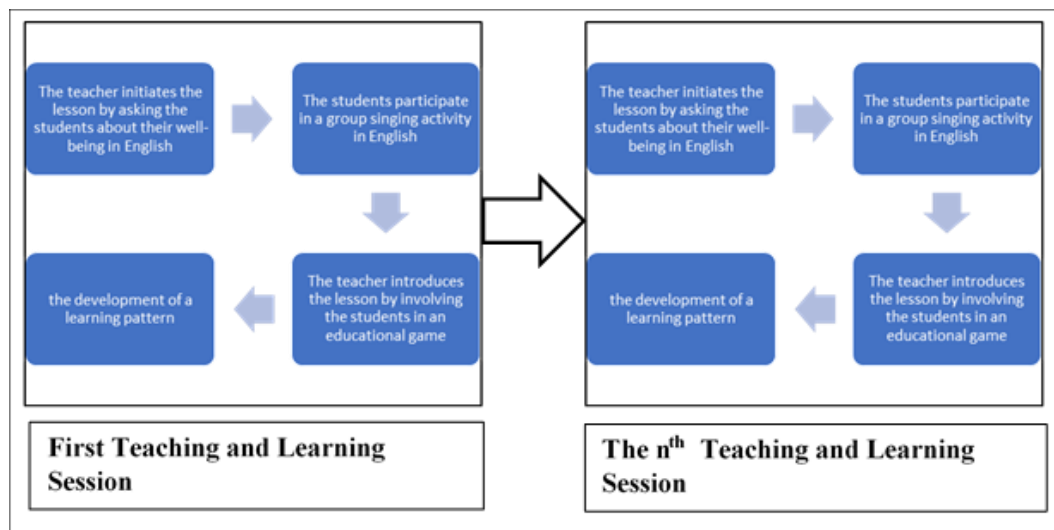


Figure 2
The Development of the Learning Pattern Across Successive Sessions

It can be concluded that this condition is essentially consistent with the Law of Effect, as explained by Thorndike as follows:

is when a modifiable connection between a situation and a response is made and is accompanied or followed by a satisfying state of affairs, that connection's strength is increased: When made and accompanied or followed by an annoying state of affairs, its strength is decreased.¹⁶

2. Respon Peserta Didik

To determine whether this learning approach was effective in developing students' readiness to learn, the effectiveness of the approach can be examined through the students' responses to the learning activities. In this regard, the researcher administered a questionnaire to obtain the students' perceptions of the learning process. The ordinal response options were as follows: (a) Strongly Agree (SA), assigned a score of 5; (b) Agree (A), assigned a score of 4; (c) Undecided (U), assigned a score of 3; (d) Disagree (D), assigned a score of 2; and (e) Strongly Disagree (SD), assigned a score of 1. A total of 23 (twenty-three) students participating in the English language learning activities were asked to respond to the following questions:

¹⁶ Edward L. Throdhike, *Op. Cit.*

Table 1
List of Questions Presented to the Students

No	Statements	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Remarks
1	Saya merasa pembelajaran B. Inggris menyenangkan						
2	Saya merasa pembelajaran B. Inggris membuat saya selalu bersemangat untuk belajar						
3	Saya merasa pembelajaran B. Inggris membantu saya mendapatkan pengetahuan baru						
4	Menurut saya pembelajaran B. Inggris sering dibuka dengan kegiatan yang menyenangkan						

Based on the data tabulation, the students' scores on the administered questionnaire can be presented as shown in the graph (Figure 5), based on the following criteria: (a) the maximum score for each item is 20; (b) the minimum score for each item is 4; (c) the maximum total score for all students is 460; and (d) the minimum total score for all students is 92 (Table 2).

Based on the data presented in Table 2, the total score obtained was 357 out of a maximum possible score of 460. According to the criteria presented in Table 3, this score falls within the very high category.

Table 2:
Total Score, Mean Score, and Minimum and Maximum Scores Based on the Data Tabulation

<i>TOTAL SCORE</i>	<i>AVERAGE</i>	<i>MIN</i>	<i>MAX</i>
357	15,52	92	460

The data tabulation also shows the total scores obtained by the students for each questionnaire item, as follows: (1) the total score for the first item was 86; (2) the total score for the second item was 87; (3) the total score for the third item was 104; and (4) the total score for the fourth item was 80 (Figure 3).

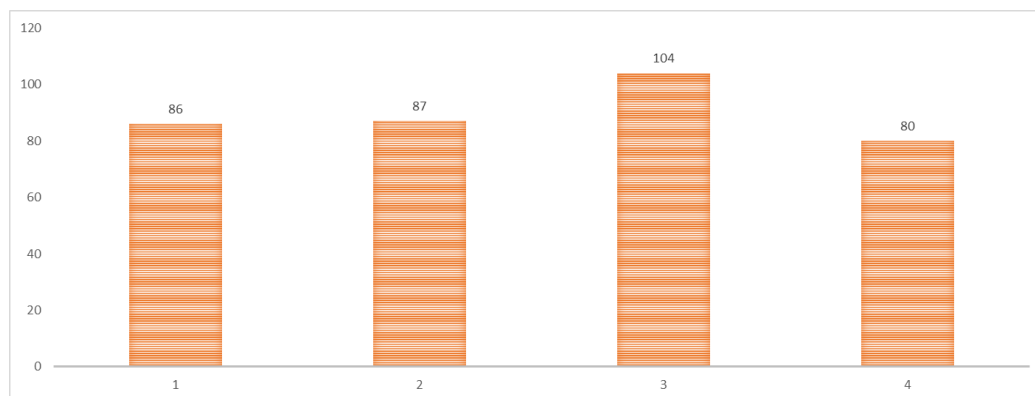


Figure 3
Total Scores for Each Questionnaire Statement Item**

These findings indicate that the students perceived that they gained new knowledge through each English language learning session. Therefore, it can also be concluded that the intended learning objectives were achieved.

Table 3
Score Criteria

Jumlah skor	Kriteria
369-460	VERY HIGH
277-368	HIGH
185-276	MODERATE
93-184	LOW
0-92	VERY LOW

Based on the data tabulation, it can also be explained that (1) 43.48% of the students fell into the “very high” category in terms of having a positive perception of learning; (2) 43.48% of the students fell into the “high” category in terms of having a positive perception of learning; (3) 13.04% of the students fell into the “moderate” category in terms of having a positive perception of learning; and (4) no students (0%) fell into the “low” or “very low” categories in terms of their positive perception of learning (Figure 4).

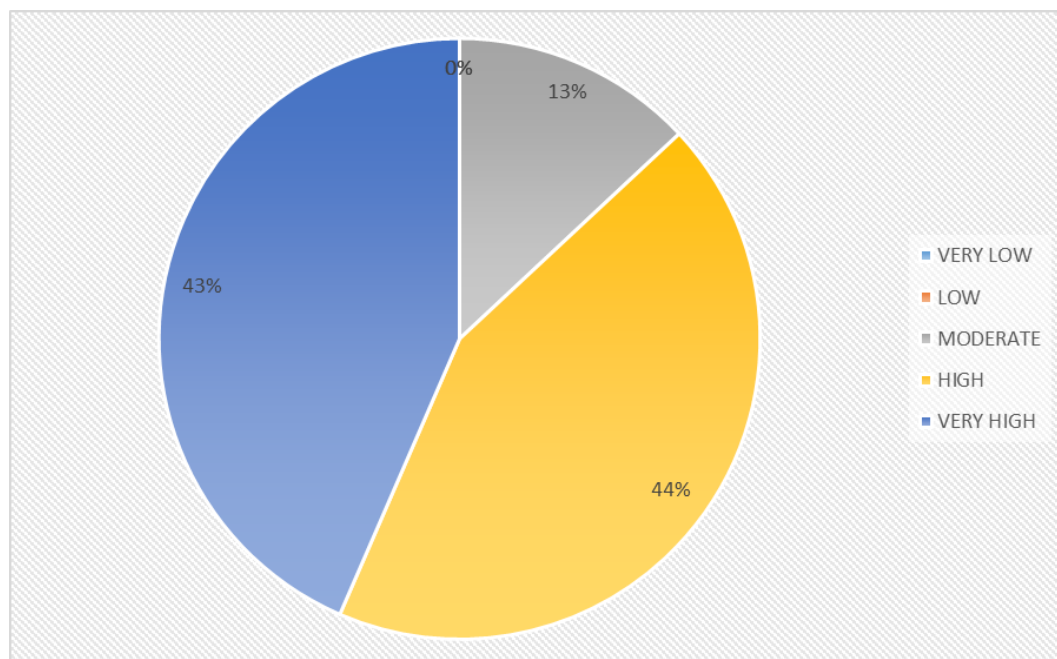


Figure 4
Results of the Data Tabulation on the Criteria for Students' Positive Perceptions of Learning

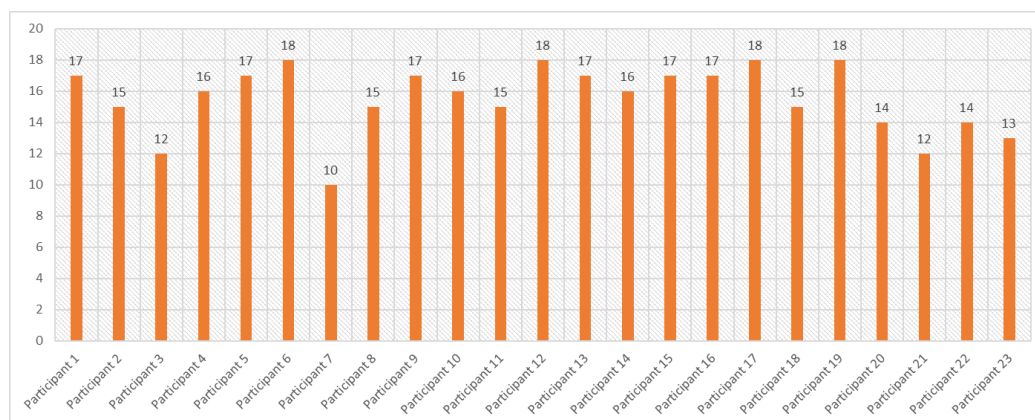


Figure 5
Total Scores Obtained by Students on the Administered Questionnaire

The data above indicates that the effective approaches to initiating English language learning, through the steps implemented, have been successful in establishing students' readiness to learn. The data also demonstrates that when instruction is delivered after students' readiness to learn has been established, the

learning process becomes highly enjoyable and enthusiastic. Repeatedly implementing this pattern of building students' readiness to learn over several learning sessions will shape students' perceptions of English language learning as a positive and enjoyable learning experience.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that it is important to establish students' readiness to learn before delivering the learning materials. The instructional procedures implemented, namely: (1) asking students how they are using English expressions; (2) singing English songs together; and (3) delivering the lesson through educational games, were found to be effective in developing students' readiness to learn. Repeated implementation of this instructional pattern over a certain period also contributes to fostering positive student perceptions of English language learning as an enjoyable and engaging experience rather than a boring one.

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