

The Effectiveness of English Language Camp for Low Intermediate English Learners A Case Study: CSR English Camp for Secondary Religious School in Patani Province, Thailand

Nuzaimah Muda, Nurzawanah Rohaizat, Rabiatul Adawiyah Abdullah Zawawi
General Studies Department, Politeknik Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, Jitra, Kedah

Abstract: English language camps have become increasingly popular as a means to enhance the learning experience of EFL learners. These camps provide learners with an immersive environment where they can practice and improve their English skills through various activities, such as games, group discussions, and cultural exchanges. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of English language camps among EFL learners in enhancing their language skills by incorporating interesting materials and empowering activities, such as imitation, responsive performance, and transactional dialogue. English language camps provide learners with opportunities to improve their language skills accurately and fluently. Quantitative method was used by administering pre-test and post-test to measure the effectiveness of the camp. The participants recorded significant improvements in the post-test. They appeared to be more at ease with the language after the execution of the camp. Thus, English Language Camp is recommended to improve learners' language skills.

Key words: *English Camp, EFL Learners, English Language Skills*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The English language stands as a cornerstone of global communication, serving not only as a lingua franca in international affairs but also as a key to accessing a vast repository of knowledge and culture. For students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the mastery of this language is not a mere academic pursuit; it is a gateway to participation in the global community and a critical tool for personal and professional development (Jenkins, 2020).

The importance of English language proficiency among EFL students is underscored by the language's universal presence in various domains: from business and science to technology and entertainment. As such, the level of English mastery can have profound implications for an individual's ability to engage with the world, access higher education, and compete in the global job market (DeCosta & Norton, 2017). Furthermore, English language proficiency enables EFL students to bridge cultural divides, allowing for cross-cultural communication and exchange. It empowers learners to expand their perspectives, understand different viewpoints, and collaborate with people from diverse backgrounds (Baker, 2018).

In educational contexts, English is often the medium of instruction for many prestigious academic programs worldwide, and thus, a high level of English mastery is a prerequisite for academic success and access to cutting-edge research (Seidlhofer, 2018). For EFL students, overcoming language barriers is crucial to fully grasp the curriculum and contribute meaningfully to academic discourse. In essence, the mastery of the English language is not merely an academic goal for EFL students—it is a critical skill that enhances their cognitive abilities, enriches their cultural experiences, and opens up a multitude of opportunities in an increasingly interconnected world (Baker, 2018). As such, the pursuit of English language proficiency remains a high priority for educators and learners alike, reflecting its enduring significance in the modern era.

According to the 2023 English Proficiency Index (EPI), Malaysia and Thailand present contrasting standings in their English language proficiency. Malaysia has demonstrated strong capabilities, ranking third in Asia with a score of 568, a marginal decrease of six points from the previous year. Malaysia has also secured the 25th position globally. On the other hand, Thailand's English proficiency has been categorised as 'very low', ranking 101st out of 113 countries worldwide on the EPI. With a score of 416, it falls significantly below the global average score of 502 (Education First, 2023). Within the ASEAN region, Thailand ranks 8th, indicating a considerable need for improvement in English language proficiency compared to its regional peers. These rankings underscore the varying levels of English language mastery in the region and highlight the importance of continued investment in language education to improve communication capabilities and global competitiveness (Kirkpatrick, 2020).

An English language camp is an immersive educational experience designed to enhance the language skills of participants, particularly those at the low intermediate level. These camps present a unique combination of learning and practical application, often away from traditional classroom settings, where learners can engage in a variety of activities that encourage language use in real-life contexts (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The effectiveness of such camps lies in their ability to provide an intensive, focused environment where learners are encouraged to use English consistently, thereby increasing their exposure to the language and offering ample opportunities for practice (Lightbown & Spada, 2017). These practical experiences are crucial for learners who have a basic understanding of English but need to improve their fluency and comprehension to advance to higher levels of proficiency (Harmer, 2015).

Additionally, English language camps often employ innovative teaching strategies that differ from conventional methods, such as role-playing, group projects, and interactive games. These strategies cater to different learning styles and help to maintain learner engagement, which is particularly important for low intermediate learners who might otherwise struggle with motivation (Brown, 2019). The social aspect of these camps cannot be overstated. By interacting with peers and instructors, learners can enhance their communicative competence, build confidence in speaking, and reduce the anxiety often associated with using a second language (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2020). The community environment of a language camp fosters a sense of companionship among participants, further motivating them to use English actively and improving their overall language skills. In other words, English language camps represent a dynamic and effective approach to language learning for low intermediate English learners by offering a blend of educational rigor and engaging activities, providing the necessary support and opportunities for learners to improve their command of the English language (Ellis, 2019).

In the context of this research, there are several compelling reasons why the Secondary Religious School in Patani Province seeks assistance from a Malaysian academic institute to hold an

English language camp for their students. The first one being the higher English proficiency in Malaysia as it has consistently ranked high in English proficiency indexes, showcasing its success in English language education (Education First, 2023). This is an opportunity for the school to leverage this expertise to enhance their own English language programs and benefit from Malaysia's proven teaching methodologies and curriculum design (Kirkpatrick, 2020). Besides that, Malaysia and Thailand share cultural similarities due to their geographical proximity and historical interactions. This cultural affinity can make Malaysian teaching styles more relatable and effective for Thai students, as compared to working with institutions from countries with more distinct cultural differences (Baker, 2018). Malaysian institutions may have experience in organising and running successful English language camps. Their models, which are adapted to the regional context, could provide valuable frameworks that can be replicated or adapted for the Thai educational environment (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Finally, students often find learning from foreign educators motivating due to the novelty and the direct exposure to different accents and dialects of English. Malaysian instructors can provide this exposure, enhancing the learning experience for Thai students (Jenkins, 2020). This study aims to examine the effectiveness of English language camps among EFL learners in enhancing their language skills by incorporating interesting materials and empowering activities, such as imitation, responsive performance, and transactional dialogue (Harmer, 2015).

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Role of English Language Camps in Improving Language Skills

English language camps play a vital role in improving language skills by providing immersive learning environments, enhancing communication skills, fostering cultural understanding, and building confidence in using the English language (Hitotuzi, 2020). Aziz (2024) advocated that these camps offer unique opportunities for practical, experiential, and cultural learning, contributing to the overall development of language proficiency and fluency.

Syahidah et al., (2019) asserted that English language camps provide an immersive learning environment where participants are fully immersed in the English language. Fandiño et al., (2019) added that this environment allows for natural and effective language learning, as participants are surrounded by competent English speakers and engage in various activities conducted in English. Erni et al., (2021) acknowledged that this immersion allows for natural and effective language learning, as participants are surrounded by competent English speakers and engage in various activities conducted in English.

Chaira (2021) underscored that the focus of English language camps on improving conversational skills and vocabulary contributes to the development of strong communication skills in the participants. As presented by Supriyono et al., (2020), the emphasis on active perception and practice throughout each day in the presence of competent English speakers facilitates the

improvement of language skills. This approach aligns with the principles of immersive language learning, where Nosirova (2023) pointed out that consistent exposure and practice in a supportive environment lead to enhanced language proficiency and confidence in using the English language.

Language camps offer valuable opportunities for cultural and experiential learning (Wilson et al., 2019). According to Bahar and Latif (2019), participants have the chance to learn about different cultures and make connections with individuals from around the world. Nguyen (2021) added that this not only helps in improving English skills but also broadens the cultural understanding of the participants.

By interacting with peers from diverse backgrounds and engaging in cultural exchange, Kim (2021) claimed that participants gain insights into different traditions, perspectives, and ways of life. This fosters not only language acquisition but also a broader global awareness and appreciation for cultural diversity. The immersive and inclusive nature of language camps creates an ideal environment for fostering cross-cultural understanding and language skills simultaneously (Gonzalez, 2023).

According to Salem (2019), confidence plays a crucial role in language acquisition, particularly in the context of engaging in conversations and making presentations to an audience. By fostering confidence, Rachmawati et al. (2020) highlighted that English language camps contribute to the overall development of language skills and effective communication abilities among participants. In the words of Oktari (2024), the integration of confidence-building activities within English language camps is instrumental in creating an environment where low-intermediate English learners can practice and apply their language skills with assurance. Noguchi (2019) added that it also underscores the significance of creating a supportive and immersive environment within the camp setting, where learners can gain the confidence to engage in conversations and presentations, thereby contributing to their overall language proficiency and communication abilities.

Given these insights, the central research question guiding this study is: How do English language camps impact the language proficiency, cultural understanding, and confidence of low-intermediate EFL learners in Patani Province, Thailand?

Theoretical Framework

This study utilized the Sociocultural Theory by Lev Vygotsky to provide a comprehensive lens to evaluate the effectiveness of English language camps for low-intermediate English learners. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory provides a robust framework for understanding the dynamics of English language camps and their impact on language learning, particularly in the context of providing opportunities for social interaction, cultural immersion, and collaborative learning within the camp environment.

According to Lantolf et al., (2021), the Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the pivotal role of social interaction and cultural context in the process of learning and cognitive development. Vygotsky

proposed the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance from a more knowledgeable person. This theory posits that individual development cannot be understood without reference to the social and cultural context within which it is embedded (Chirkov, 2020).

As stated by Erbil (2020), Vygotsky emphasized the influence of cultural and social contexts on learning, claiming that knowledge is constructed through social collaboration. Carpendale and Lewis (2020) added that the theory stresses the role that social interaction plays in psychological development and suggests that human learning is largely a social process, with cognitive functions formed based on interactions with those around us who are "more skilled." It also focuses on how mentors and peers influence individual learning, as well as how cultural beliefs and attitudes are developed through interactions within social groups or by participating in cultural events (Mishra, 2020).

Instructional Design Model

The ADDIE Model is used as the instructional design model for the English language camp to provide a rich and impactful learning experience to the participants. The implementation of the ADDIE model in the context of an English language camp for low-intermediate English learners involves a systematic and iterative approach to designing and delivering effective language learning experiences within the camp setting. The model encompasses five phases—Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation—to ensure that educational content is aligned with learner needs and achieves desired learning outcomes.

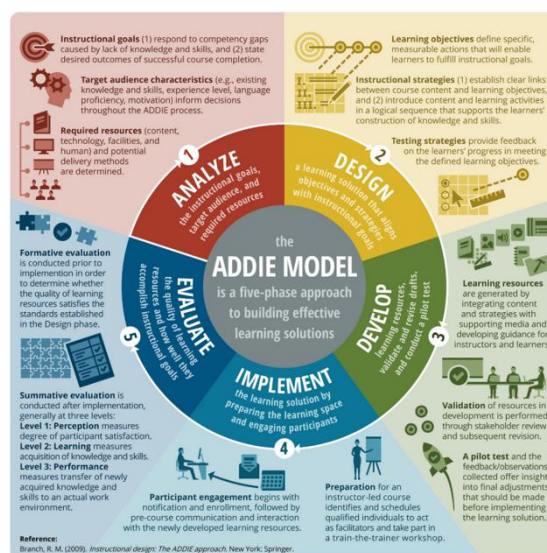


Figure 1: The ADDIE Model (Branch, 2009)

According to Spatioti et al., (2021), the structured framework of the ADDIE model offers a clear, systematic approach that guides instructional designers through each phase of training development, allowing for adaptability to different learning environments and needs. Abuhassna et al., (2024) added that this comprehensive analysis emphasizes the importance of understanding learner needs, environmental factors, and objectives at the outset, leading to more targeted and effective training solutions.

The iterative nature of the ADDIE model ensures that the instruction functions smoothly, allowing for continuous improvement and refinement of the learning experiences (Feng & Sangsawang, 2023). According to Zhou et al., (2023), it also facilitates data-driven decision-making by systematically collecting and analyzing data at each stage, supporting informed adjustments that enhance the learning experience.

In summary, the ADDIE model provides a structured and adaptable approach to creating effective learning experiences and instructional content, making it well-suited for the design and implementation of language learning programs within the unique context of an English language camp for low intermediate English learners.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This quasi-experimental study was conducted to measure the effectiveness of the English Language Camp on the low-intermediate English learners from the Padungsat Vitya School, Pattani, Thailand. A total of 49 students were chosen to participate in this study through purposive sampling. The participants are low-intermediate English language learners between the ages of 16 and 17. The participants were put under an intensive 3-day English Language Camp that covers 12 basic components of English communication skills.

The research data were collected via a set of questionnaires developed by the researchers, consisting of 10 positive statements, each of which was associated with a 5-point Likert scale. A score of '1' corresponded to 'Extremely Disagree', and '5' corresponded to 'Extremely Agree'. The questionnaire was introduced to the participants twice; first at the beginning of the English language camp, and again at the end of the camp. The items in the questionnaire are listed in the table below.

Table 1: Questionnaire Item

No. of Item	Statement
1	I can introduce myself and respond to questions about myself
2	I can count 1 to 25 without struggling
3	I can give step-by-step instructions clearly
4	I can tell time correctly
5	I can pronounce English words correctly

6	I know how and where to look for the meanings of difficult words
7	I can understand and follow instructions correctly
8	I can give directions correctly
9	I can ask questions correctly to get the information I needed
10	I can make requests correctly to get what I wanted

Descriptive statistics were employed to calculate the frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation for each item in the questionnaire. This analytical approach was chosen for its ability to clarify the relationships between variables within the sample or population and to present data in a structured and meaningful way (Kaur, Stoltzfus, & Yellapu, 2018). The results highlight the most frequently selected response options from the Likert scale in the questionnaire across all participants.

The mean value of the pre-test scores was analyzed to provide a baseline average of the participants' initial language proficiency levels before the camp. This serves as a reference point for assessing the effectiveness of the camp in enhancing language skills. After the camp, the post-test scores' mean value was evaluated to project the average language proficiency improvements achieved by the participants after attending the English Language Camp.

The standard deviation values of the pre-test and post-test scores were also analyzed to provide crucial insights into the variability of the participants' language proficiency levels before and after attending the English Language Camp. These measures are instrumental in understanding the consistency or spread of the language proficiency improvements experienced by the participants, thereby contributing to the assessment of the camp's effectiveness in enhancing the English language skills of low-intermediate learners.

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Based on Table 2, the mean of the pre-test scores provides a baseline average of the participants' initial performance or condition before attending the English language camp. The mean of the post-test scores indicates the average performance or condition of the participants after the camp. While the pre-test scores indicated that the respondents perceived basic English language ability was rather low before attending the English language camp, the post-test scores indicated that the camp had impacted their language ability.



Table 2: Descriptive Analysis for Pre and Post Test

No.	Item	1		2		3		4		5		Mean		Std. Dev	
		PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
1.	I can introduce myself and respond to questions about myself	0	0	14	2	24	12	9	25	2	10	2.94	3.82	.711	.873
		0%	0%	28.6%	4.1%	49.0%	24.5%	18.4%	51.0%	2.1%	20.4%				
2.	I can count 1 to 25 without struggling	0	0	11	0	8	4	11	10	19	35	3.74	4.58	1.209	.731
		0%	0%	22.4%	0%	16.3%	8.2%	22.4%	20.4%	38.8%	71.4%				
3.	I can give step-by-step instructions clearly	3	1	35	9	10	24	1	15	0	0	2.2	3.08	0.571	.752
		6.1%	2.0%	71.4%	18.4%	20.4%	49.0%	2.0%	30.6%	0%	0%				
4.	I can tell time correctly	1	0	22	2	19	16	7	25	0	6	2.68	3.72	.768	.730
		2.0%	0%	44.9%	4.1%	38.8%	32.7%	14.3%	51.0%	0%	12.2%				
5.	I can pronounce English words correctly	1	0	26	1	18	26	4	20	0	2	2.56	3.5	.760	.647
		2.0%	0%	53.1%	2.0%	36.7%	53.1%	8.2%	40.8%	0%	4.1%				
6.	I know how and where to look for the meanings of difficult words	2	2	22	5	16	12	9	24	0	6	2.72	3.6	.948	1.030
		4.1%	4.1%	44.9%	10.2%	32.7%	24.5%	18.4%	49.0%	0%	12.2%				
7.	I can understand and follow instructions correctly	0	0	31	4	16	15	2	29	0	1	2.5	3.62	.863	.830
		0%	0%	63.3%	8.2%	32.7%	30.6%	4.1%	59.2%	0%	2.1%				



8.	I can give directions correctly	5	1	36	8	6	21	2	18	0	1	2.22	3.3	1.036	1.055
		10.2%	2.0%	73.5%	16.3%	12.2%	42.9%	4.1%	36.7%	0%	2.0%				
9.	I can ask questions correctly to get the information I needed	1	2	28	6	20	25	0	14	0	2	2.52	3.28	1.074	1.179
		2.0%	4.1%	57.1%	12.2%	40.8%	51.0%	0%	28.6%	0%	4.1%				
10.	I can make requests correctly to get what I wanted	8	0	27	4	13	17	1	25	0	3	2.3	3.68	1.313	1.168
		16.3%	0%	55.1%	8.2%	26.5%	34.7%	2.0%	51.0%	0%	6.1%				

Table 2 illustrates the participants' improvement across all items, as evidenced by the differences in their responses. For Item 1, 24% of participants selected a score of 3 during the pre-test, but their responses during the post-test predominantly shifted to a score of 4, indicating a notable enhancement in self-perceived ability. The mean score for Item 1 increased by 0.88. The most pronounced improvement was observed for Item 10, "I can make requests correctly to get what I want." Pre-test responses were primarily at a score of 2, indicating disagreement, while post-test responses shifted to a score of 4, suggesting strong agreement.

The ability to count from 1 to 25 also showed improvement; the mean score increased from 3.74 to 4.58, indicating that while students were already proficient in this area, the camp further reinforced their skills. Regarding the ability to give step-by-step instructions, only 28.5% rated positively before the camp, with the mean score increasing from 2.2 to 3.08. The ability to tell time correctly also saw enhancement; pre-camp, 77.6% rated positively, with the mean score increasing from 2.68 to 3.72. Pronunciation skills improved markedly, with 71.4% of students rating positively pre-camp, and the mean score increasing from 2.56 to 3.5. The ability to look up meanings of difficult words also saw an increase in positive ratings from 69.4% pre-camp, with the mean score rising from 2.72 to 3.6, reflecting enhanced resourcefulness.

Understanding and following instructions improved, with the mean score increasing from 2.5 pre-camp to 3.62 post-camp, although the percentage of positive ratings slightly decreased from 95.9% to 91.8%. This suggests overall better comprehension and execution of instructions. The ability to give directions correctly saw a significant increase in positive ratings from 59.2% pre-camp, with the mean score rising from 2.22 to 3.3. The skill of asking questions to get needed information improved, with 72.4% rating positively pre-camp, and the mean score increasing from 2.52 to 3.28.

The significant improvement observed in Items 1 and 10 can be attributed to the camp's focus on practical, conversational English. Activities such as role-playing and group discussions likely contributed to these gains by providing real-life contexts for practicing making requests and engaging in dialogues.

In comparing the pre- and post-test mean scores, Item 9 exhibited the least significant improvement, with a difference of only 0.76. Pre-test responses for this item were predominantly at a score of 2, indicating disagreement, and post-test responses shifted to a score of 3, suggesting a neutral stance. This modest improvement may reflect the complexity of the skill being measured or a lack of emphasis on this specific area during the camp activities.

In summary, the data indicates that the English Language Camp had a positive impact on the students' self-assessed English proficiency across all measured items. The mean scores for all items improved, and the percentage of students rating their skills positively increased post-camp, suggesting that the camp was effective in enhancing various aspects of English communication skills among low-intermediate learners. The camp's emphasis on interactive and participatory activities, which align with



Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory by promoting social interaction and collaborative learning, likely benefited the significant improvements in practical communication skills. Meanwhile, the lesser improvement in Item 9 suggests that certain grammatical or syntactical aspects of language learning may require longer-term or more focused interventions.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to demonstrate the effectiveness of an English Language Camp for low intermediate English learners. The findings indicated that the mean values for the post-test were significantly higher than the pre-test mean values, signifying that the camp has proven to be a valuable and impactful experience for the participants. The immersive and intensive nature of the camp provided a conducive environment for language learning, allowing the participants to practice and improve their English language skills in a practical and supportive setting. The results indicated significant progress in the participants' perception of their speaking ability, demonstrating the effectiveness of the camp in addressing the specific needs of low intermediate English learners.

These findings align well with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which posits that social interaction and cultural context are crucial for cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, learning is fundamentally a social process, where interaction with more knowledgeable others (peers, instructors) and engagement in culturally meaningful activities play a vital role in cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). The camp environment, rich in social interactions and cultural exchanges, provided the necessary scaffolding that facilitated language learning and cognitive development. This is consistent with previous studies that have highlighted the benefits of immersive and socially interactive language learning environments for EFL learners (Lantolf et al., 2021; Erbil, 2020).

Key aspects of Vygotsky's theory that were evident in the camp's design and outcomes include:

1. **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD):** Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD refers to the difference between what a learner can do without help and what they can achieve with guidance and encouragement from a skilled partner. The camp's activities were designed to challenge participants just beyond their current abilities, providing opportunities for growth within their ZPD. The significant improvements in skills such as self-introduction, counting, and giving instructions indicate that the participants were operating within their ZPD, with the camp facilitators providing the necessary support to help them achieve higher levels of proficiency.
2. **Social Interaction:** The camp emphasized collaborative learning through group activities, peer interactions, and instructor-led sessions. These social interactions are crucial for

internalizing new language concepts. The increased post-test scores across various language skills demonstrate the effectiveness of these social learning opportunities. For instance, the ability to introduce oneself and respond to questions saw a notable increase, from a mean of 2.94 in the pre-test to 3.82 in the post-test, indicating that social interactions during the camp significantly contributed to language acquisition.

3. **Cultural Context:** Language learning is deeply embedded in cultural context. The camp provided a rich cultural environment where learners could engage in culturally relevant activities and practices. This immersion helped participants to not only learn the language but also understand its use in different cultural contexts. This is reflected in the improved ability to follow instructions and give directions, with mean scores rising from 2.5 to 3.62 and 2.22 to 3.3, respectively.
4. **Scaffolding:** The camp provided scaffolding through structured activities and ongoing feedback, enabling learners to build on their existing knowledge and skills. The structured support helped learners to gradually take on more complex tasks independently, as evidenced by the improved post-test scores in tasks such as counting from 1 to 25 (mean increase from 3.74 to 4.58) and asking questions correctly (mean increase from 2.52 to 3.28).

Thus, the English Language Camp has proven to be an effective and valuable educational program, providing a supportive and immersive environment for language learning for low intermediate learners. The positive outcomes observed in this study emphasize the importance of such experiential learning opportunities in enhancing the language skills and overall development of low intermediate English learners.

While this study illustrates the effectiveness of an English Language Camp for low intermediate English learners, several limitations should be noted. Firstly, the short duration of the camp may not have been adequate for fully developing certain language skills. Language acquisition is a gradual process that often requires sustained practice and reinforcement over extended periods. The limited time frame of the camp might have provided only a preliminary boost in language proficiency, and some skills may need more prolonged exposure and practice to solidify and become second nature to the learners.

Secondly, reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases. Self-assessment can be subjective, and participants might overestimate their improvements due to a desire to present themselves in a positive light, known as social desirability bias. This reliance on self-reported measures means that the actual improvements in language proficiency might be different from what participants reported, thus affecting the accuracy of the results.

For future research, qualitative studies that delve into the personal experiences and perspectives of participants in English Language Camps could provide a deeper understanding of the



psychological and social aspects of language learning. Exploring the participants' motivations, challenges, and transformative experiences during the camp would enrich the understanding of the camp's impact. Researchers could also focus on conducting longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of participation in English Language Camps on the language proficiency and confidence of low intermediate English learners. This would provide valuable insights into the sustainability of the skills acquired and the lasting effects of the camp experience on the participants' language abilities.

A comparative analysis of different types of language learning environments, such as traditional classroom settings, online language courses, and immersive language camps, could also be conducted to evaluate the unique benefits and effectiveness of each approach for low intermediate English learners. This comparative research could offer valuable guidance for educators and program developers in selecting the most effective learning environments.



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