

Evaluating the Effectiveness of English Camp Activities: Insights from the Southern Thailand Technical College Students

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Abstract: English camp activities serve as an effective platform for enhancing the language proficiency of EFL students by providing an immersive and interactive learning environment. This study employed a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the experiences of 134 students from nine technical colleges in Southern Thailand. The aim was to examine the participants' experiences with the structure of the English camp activities and their potential influence on the students' linguistic and social development. Data were compiled using Google Forms for surveys and observations to gauge student participation, evaluate participation, and motivate the use and improvement of English language skills. The results exemplify those hands-on experiences with the English language are responsible for increasing English language participation and improvements in English proficiency overall. English camps provide a supportive and dynamic environment that encourages students to practice the language in an immersive, credentialed learning environment. By fostering a supportive and dynamic atmosphere, English camp programs enable students to practice the language actively, helping them develop better communication skills and greater confidence in using English in real-world scenarios. Students also reflect on the experiences in that they build upon soft skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and seizing opportunities. These findings suggest the importance of implementing interactive experiential learning strategies in EFL education, leading to higher levels of engagement with students and greater linguistic development overall.

Keywords: *English Camp Activities, EFL Students, English Language Proficiency, Student Participation.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Currently, the focus and methodologies of English camp activities have undergone notable transformation, reflecting broader advancements in education and language learning. A key emerging approach is theme-based learning, where camps are centred around specific themes such as environmental conservation, technology, or cultural exchange. This approach enhances the relevance and engagement of the learning experience. As a consequence of the different camp activities, students can increase their skills in the language, and take part in a socio-psychological development process that advances their awareness and motivation level, especially for those students who think of English as a difficult subject (Ketamon, T. et al., 2020). In the same manner, (Aswad, 2017) also described several reasons why English camps support the development of proficiency and motivation in students' learning of English based on three components (a) the complete learning model environment, (b) cooperative teaching and learning model, (c) the opportunity to use spoken English in real situations as a learning tool.

In addition, these opportunities to develop English language skills are particularly relevant for students in the context of technical education, as these skills support global communication and can facilitate their professional development. English camps facilitate an immersive and interactive learning environment and support students' engagement with the language in real-life situations. This research study explored the role of English camp activities at Phatthalung Technical College in the development of students' language proficiency, engagement, and confidence. The study focuses on a cohort of 134 students from nine technical colleges in Southern Thailand and investigates how structured activities enhance both language development and social purpose. A key reason for organising English camp activities for the technical college in southern Thailand is the country's low level of English proficiency. The previous research by Inkaew (2020), noted that the Thailand Commission of Higher Education has prioritised the role of English since the 1999 reform; however, the results of English language education have consistently failed to meet expectations, with widespread dissatisfaction continuing to the present day.

According to the English Proficiency Index by Education First, Asia displays the widest variation in English proficiency among global regions (Human Resources Online, 2021). For example, Singapore ranks in the 'very high' proficiency band, the Philippines in the 'high' category, Malaysia at a 'moderate' level, Indonesia in the 'low' range, while Thailand is placed in the 'very low' proficiency category (Nuraeni, & Kamila, 2020). All the technical colleges participating in this English camp offer a range of programs in technical fields, including tourism. Despite this, a significant number of recent graduates still lack the level of English proficiency demanded by the job market (Inkaew, 2020). As a result, limited English skills continue to hinder employment opportunities, especially in the tourism industry, where strong English communication is essential. Moreover, the reasons behind Thai students' limited English proficiency include a weak understanding of basic English concepts, a lack of confidence in speaking, anxiety about using the language, especially in front of their classmates and a limited vocabulary (Amelia, Ni'mah, & Sholihah, 2023).

Therefore, the English camp aims to improve students' English skills, thereby supporting English education and broadening their future career prospects. These camps offer a range of benefits that boost both language proficiency and personal growth. By creating an immersive environment where English is used consistently, students can actively practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing in real-life situations. According to Ketamon, T. et al.

(2020), immersing oneself in an English-speaking environment is one of the most effective ways to accelerate and enhance English language learning. In Malaysia, where English is commonly used as a second language in education, business, and daily life, learners benefit from frequent exposure and opportunities to use the language in real-life situations. Additionally, having Malaysian facilitators is a significant advantage. As non-native speakers who have successfully mastered English themselves, they can better relate to the challenges faced by learners. They often use effective teaching strategies tailored to the local context and can explain difficult concepts in both English and the learners' native language, helping to bridge understanding. Their cultural familiarity also creates a more comfortable and encouraging learning environment, which can boost learners' confidence and motivation.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEWS

Several studies have emphasised the importance of experiential learning in language acquisition. One method gaining more and more popularity is the use of English camps which provide opportunities for real communication in an immersive context and have the added benefit of being more effective than other ways of learning because they utilise real-life contexts and role-play experiences. Learners who engage in this type of interaction usually show greater improvement in their speaking and listening skills than learners in typical classrooms.

Concerning motivational strategies, Karunananda (2024) states that motivation is an essential component of all aspects of language learning. The study discusses a number of different motivators responsible for learners' enthusiasm, engagement, and overall academic performance, namely intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, instrumental motivation, and integrative motivation. The author also proposes ways of enhancing learner motivation considering the new phenomenon of enhanced global demand for English language proficiency.

In support of this idea, Wahyuni & Naim (2019) state that the methods and principles of instruction for teaching the English language are equally important to improving outcomes for students. In terms of methods of instruction, the authors suggest using humour in the communication of information in the classroom. Humour is important in a number of ways including the teacher-learner experience. Humour improves the teacher-learner relationship

and also enhances the transfer of knowledge to the learner through increased engagement in a more apprehensive learning context.

Meanwhile, Tso (2020) explores the use of EFL vocabulary learning apps, which help learners develop skills like phonological awareness, morphological recognition, and contextual vocabulary understanding. However, the study notes that further empirical research, especially involving direct assessments of learners' performance, is needed to validate these tools' effectiveness.

An effective way to increase one's language skills is by utilising English camps, which provide an enabling environment for role-play and real communication practice experiences or known as the communicative approach within camps. Research has shown that learners who are engaged in similar interactive experiences are more likely to improve their speaking and listening skills more than students in a standard classroom setting. For example, Fawazien & Indrayani (2021) stated that the communicative approach is represented as the English Area at Latee Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School, which consists of approaches to teach applicable skills that match up with English Camps for habitual frequent delivery of communication in English. The communicative approach emphasises fluency and situational use of language, while permitting learners the right to attempt use of language, tolerate mistakes, as well as restate individual transferable skills in context (tuitional approach). Teachers guide learners to engage meaningfully as a community of practice, in which to relate skills like speaking, reading, listening, as well as allowing learners to create grammar rules.

A concrete example of this can be found in Amelia, Ni'mah, & Sholihah (2023), who wrote about an English camp at an Eakkapapsasanawich Islamic School in Thailand. Camp activities included singing songs in English, games, and speaking to tourists on Ao-Nang beach. The English camp concluded with students reflecting on their activities and conducting awards presentations to recognise both their learning, as well as their experience. With a focus on learning and enjoyment, the camp demonstrated practical opportunities for students to build their English engagement. There are other similarities, including the Student Study Service Program (KKN) in Indonesia which includes English camps in its implementation of the program. Nuraeni & Kamila (2020) noted that the KKN program at the University of IBN Khaldun Bogor improved English in students from Thailand through active and immersive

participation in various activities while promoting cultural exchange and societal interaction as well.

A more recent example is demonstrated by David, Resuello, and Gara-Ancheta (2024), who stated the joint teaching methods used in the National Learning Camp were effective, producing positive results on several aspects of student learning. Feedback provided by the volunteer teachers yielded a general positive response from the teachers because of learning environment aspects and student learning engagement delivery methods. The study also noted the need to refine these instructional strategies to improve student engagement and enjoyment in their learning experiences.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This section provides details of the methodological approach taken to assess the outcomes of English camp activities for technical college students from Southern Thailand. This study aims to understand the students' experiences and perceptions of the camp experience in terms of English language ability and level of engagement. A mixed research method was used for this purpose, which included using a range of data collection methods, both qualitative and quantitative to provide a full understanding of the outcomes. In this section, we outline the research design, the participants, the instruments, and the data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

The evaluation of the four-day English enhancement camp hosted by Phatthalung Technical College adopted a convergent mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the camp's effectiveness (Alnasser, 2022). This approach was chosen to capitalise on the strengths of both data types, quantitative for statistical trends and qualitative for in-depth insight. A convenience sampling strategy was employed due to the logistical ease of accessing participants who attended the camp (Teepapal, 2024).

The study focused primarily on 134 students from nine technical colleges across Thailand. Although this sampling method introduced some potential biases, it was appropriate given the exploratory nature of the study. To strengthen data validity, triangulation was employed by comparing both data sources. Additionally, the study acknowledged the presence

of 20 student facilitators from POLIMAS and 6 camp instructors from POLITEKNIK Malaysia, but their responses were excluded from the core analysis to minimise external influence.

3.2 Research Instrument

The primary research instrument was a structured feedback form administered at the end of the camp using Google Forms, a commercially available online tool used because of the ease of use, accessibility, and automatic aggregation of data (Lobo et al., 2022). The feedback form contained both quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative component consisted of a five-point Likert Scale designed to assess participant perceptions of the usefulness, relevance, and enjoyment of five key camp activities: ice breaking, say it right, fruit salad, commercial advertisement, and cultural performance (Sert & Özkan, 2018). The qualitative component included an open-ended question encouraging participants to reflect on and share their personal experiences during the camp. This was included to add depth and context to the quantitative findings (Marhaya, 2014).

Participants were informed that the feedback would remain anonymous, confidential, and unidentifiable, which helped ensure candid and authentic responses. The design of the questionnaire prioritised clarity, delivery standards, internal and external consistency, and content validity (Perifanou & Economides, 2025). Participants were informed that the feedback would remain anonymous, confidential, and unidentifiable, which helped ensure candid and authentic responses. The design of the questionnaire prioritised clarity, delivery standards, internal and external consistency, and content validity (Perifanou & Economides, 2025).

3.3 Data Analysis Method

Quantitative data from the Likert-scale responses were exported from Google Forms to Microsoft Excel for analysis. Excel was chosen due to its user-friendliness and familiarity among student researchers (Lancaster et al., 2015). The quantitative data were subjected to descriptive and non-parametric statistical techniques, including calculation of means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions to determine average ratings and variability in responses. The purpose of the quantitative analysis is to identify patterns in participant satisfaction in order to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the camp's structure and delivery.

Qualitative data from open-ended responses were analysed through a thematic analysis approach (Rossiter et al., 2024). Thematic analysis is a systematic and vigorous inductive approach with several stages of engaging with the data through a coded process and creating themes from the data. Initially, all textual responses were thoroughly reviewed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences. An iterative coding process was engaged in, which involved identifying similarities in participants' responses, identifying shared feelings and focusing on the reader's and participants' inferences and the reporting of salient themes that emerged from the data (Rossiter et al., 2024). The codes developed were then refined, and collated into the themes that represented the participants' experiences collectively and the underlying features that informed their experiences, thus gaining understanding of their perceptions of the camp's effectiveness (Yiend et al., 2016).

The qualitative data also enabled a richer evaluative account of the camp's impact. The use of mixed-methods approach used in this study, which synthesised quantitative Likert scale data with qualitative open-ended data, provided a comprehensive, richer evaluation of the effectiveness of the English enhancement camps, and importantly, provided evidential insights to inform optimising the future sustainment, development and improvement to the program (Wong, 2014). A mixed-method evaluation is important, as it helps to reveal characteristics that led to student satisfaction in this study, so supports were implemented for motivation (Behnke et al., 2014).

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

As shown in Table 1, the evaluation reveals a robust level of participant satisfaction across all facets of the program, as evidenced by consistently high ratings that predominantly range from 4.1 up to 4.4. The clustering of results suggests a clear alignment of the program's purpose and participants' expectations. The overall positive results suggest the overall program was effective in meeting what the participants needed and wanted. This would entail the relative strengths in logistics, culture, and fun and excitement were working to enhance participant satisfaction (Behnke et al., 2014). The highest degree of satisfaction was observed in areas such as credibility of success and perceived benefits, with the enhancement of pre-program knowledge and participant confidence to implement knowledge learned (Wayment & McDonald, 2017). These results imply that participants appreciated the immediate value of the program, but also suggested there could be long-term value for enhancing their skills and

opportunities (Beaudoin et al., 2018). While results generated positive assessments on all components of the program, venue placement and time for the program received the least positive ratings and were rated lower (but still a large number of satisfied participants) (Xuan et al., 2025). The bottlenecks from the findings suggest that there could be targeted improvements to the experience of participants, which could involve allocations of resources or venue. (Suparmanto et al., 2023).

Table 1

Feedback on the camp's effectiveness

No	Questionnaire Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Course objectives are achieved	4.38	0.69
2	The course content/activities are appropriate.	4.38	0.77
3	Effective delivery	4.36	0.76
4	Conducive venue chosen	4.25	0.81
5	The programme is well planned and executed.	4.32	0.83
6	The allocation of time for each module is suitable	4.25	0.81
7	An increase in knowledge/understanding as compared to before	4.28	0.84
8	More confident in applying the knowledge gained throughout the course	4.35	0.80
9	In general, the programme is successful and beneficial	4.29	0.79
10	I know the objectives of the programme.	4.13	0.89

The detailed analysis of participant ratings for specific activities shows a high level of engagement and enjoyment with ratings for all activities above 4.2(Miller's, 1981). Additional insights around satisfaction levels for the activities in terms of percentages are shown in Figure 1 while Table 2 represents this information based on mean scores. The 'COMMERCIAL AD' was the preferred activity, followed closely by the 'CULTURAL PERFORMANCE' and 'FRUIT SALAD'. Thus, this hierarchy suggests that activities with a mix of entertainment, cultural surprise and sensory input are very appealing to participants and highlight a preference for experiences that are varied and engaging. In contrast, activities such as "SAY IT RIGHT!" and "ICE BREAKING" had relatively lower ratings out some room for improvement through gamification, revised content or different facilitation approaches. By making improvements

intentionally within the guidelines, it may create a more favourable climate which leads to more participant excitement and involvement (Masberg & Silverman, 1996). Effective engagement involving local guides can play a significant role in participant satisfaction (Behnke et al., 2014). In addition, collecting and analysing participant feedback is also an important tool for event organisers to improve satisfaction and retain repeat participants (Tsai, 2020).

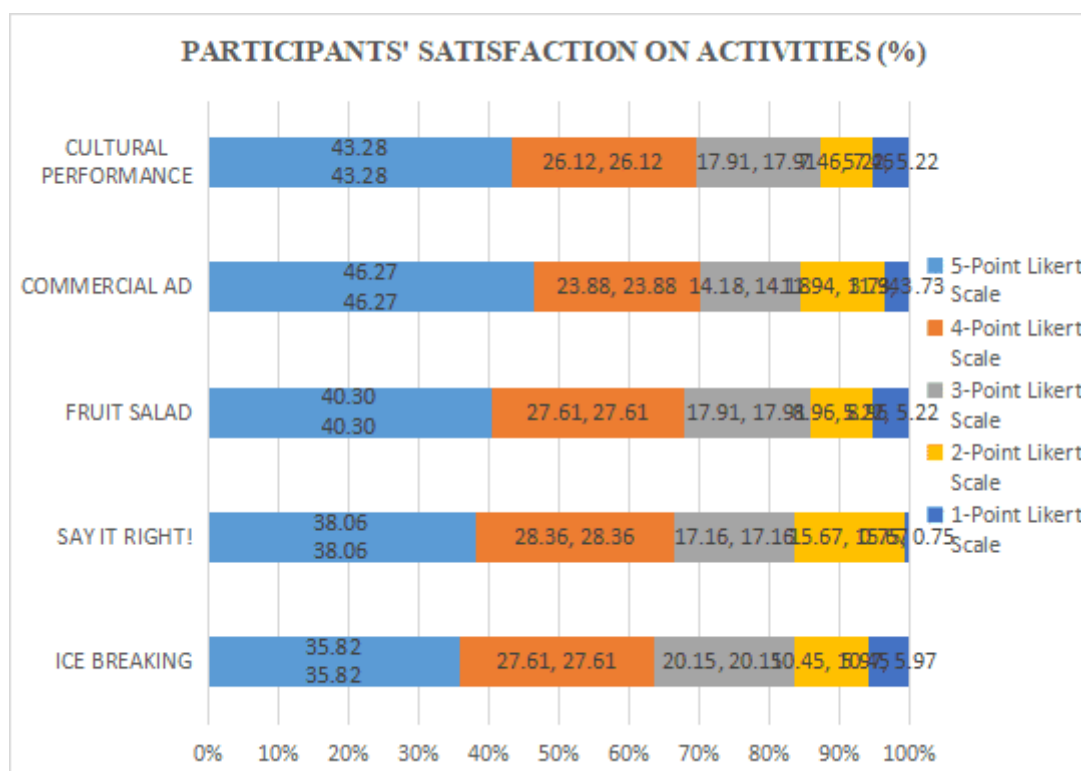


Figure 1: Campers' satisfaction with activities

Table 2

Campers' satisfaction with activities

No.	Questionnaire Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Satisfaction with activity: ICE BREAKING	3.77	1.21
2	Satisfaction with activity: SAY IT RIGHT!	3.87	1.11
3	Satisfaction with activity: FRUIT SALAD	3.89	1.19
4	Satisfaction with activity: COMMERCIAL AD	3.97	1.19
5	Satisfaction with activity: CULTURAL PERFORMANCE	3.95	1.18

Table 3 shows the results of a thematic analysis of the open-ended responses of the participants of the Phatthalung TVET English Camp. A number of themes emerged from the analysis regarding the participants' perceptions and the program's characteristics. The most extreme example was Positive Feedback, with participants using descriptors such as "Very good", "Excellent", and "Fantastic" to define their experience, indicating a great appreciation for the camp's delivery, content, and context. Directly related was Emotional Enjoyment, with descriptors like "Happy and funny", "Feeling good", and "Fun". Some responses indicated that the program was successful at providing educational value, while indicating its approach was engaging and fun for learners, and enjoyable to attend.

Table 3
Identified main themes for the thematic analysis approach

Theme	Description	Sample Comments
<i>Positive Feedback</i>	General praise for the programme	"Fantastic!", "Very good", "Excellent", "Great"
<i>Emotional Enjoyment</i>	Expressions of fun, happiness, and feeling good	"Happy and funny", "I am happy", "Feeling good"
<i>Appreciation & Gratitude</i>	Comments showing thanks or recognition	"Thank you", "Thanks for organising", "Teacher Catt is very beautiful"
<i>Suggestions & Requests</i>	Comments with ideas for improvement or future hopes	"I want this activity every year", "More activities", "Should be annual"
<i>Neutral/No Input</i>	Responses indicating no feedback	"No comment", "-", "Don't have"
<i>Group Attachment</i>	Love or praise for specific groups or teams	"I love group 6", "I love group 9"

Another highly noted theme was Appreciation and Gratitude, where individuals noted their appreciation towards the organisers and facilitators. Many included phrases like "Thank you", "Thanks for organising", and even compliments like "Teacher Catt is very beautiful" demonstrated the personal nature that the organisers and facilitators have established a positive impression or personal engagement with the participants whom they encountered. Individuals mentioned Suggestions and Requests for future programmes. Many people advocated for the programme to take place more regularly, as indicated by comments like, "I want this activity every year", and "More activities than this". This represents the perceived value the camp has

from the perspective of the participants and their desire for continued opportunities to practice and improve their English language skills. Some comments fell under the category of Neutral or No Input, as in "No comment", or "-", and a small number of responses acknowledged a Group Attachment, expressing their appreciation of the relationships they served with the group such as "I love group 6". Overall, the comments about the programme reiterate the success of the experience in creating a positive and enjoyable impactful learning experience, while also demonstrating a multitude of opportunities for improvements in the future, and continued programming engagements.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to assess the effectiveness of English camp tasks developed to change the language proficiency, make participation in learning material more visible as a step beyond passive learning and augment self-confidence among Southern Thailand Technical College students. In terms of, overall participant satisfaction, our results demonstrate a high level of satisfaction across the program aspects with strong satisfaction with all aspects of the English camp, with consistent high ratings, mostly in the level range of 4.1 up to 4.4, demonstrating satisfaction with the program alignment between learning tasks and meeting the objectives of the camp. The areas of greatest satisfaction that emerged from the participant perceptions of the English camp were: 1. success of the program, 2. perceived benefits of the program, 3. knowledge increase, and 4. continuing increased confidence in implementing the knowledge from the program tasks. The importance of these four areas shows that while the participants valued the immediate impact of the English camp program, they were also realising potential long-term effectiveness in enhancing ability, capability, and future possibilities. Although every aspect related to the program of the English camp received positive values, the lowest ratings were associated with the suitability of the venue and the time allowed to conduct the activities. While all program aspects received satisfactory ratings, each of these two areas contained the lowest level of satisfaction which shows potential for focused changes in just these two areas potentially with proper resources and infrastructure improvements.

In conclusion, English camp activities serve as an effective means to improve the language skills of EFL students, by providing an engaging and hands-on learning environment. The results of this study support that hands-on learning experiences significantly

increase student engagement, motivation, and overall English language learning. English camp programs aim to present opportunities for students to practice language in a safe, multi-modal, and interactive learning environment fostering language practice and ultimately increasing ability and confidence in using English in real-life contexts. In addition to the improvements in English language skills, the English camp activities presented engagement opportunities for students to develop essential soft skills like collaboration, problem-solving, and adaptability. The results of this study emphasise the need to utilise and promote interactive, and experiential learning strategies for student engagement and language development in EFL.

Future studies could include the perspectives of parents and teachers to help understand students' ongoing trajectories following the camp, for example, their increased confidence and use of language. Also, comparative studies between different types of camps (for example, rural vs. urban camps, virtual vs face-to-face camps) may help researchers to identify effective practices and contextual differences which impact learning outcomes.

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