

# The Roles of One-Day English Camp in Improving Language Learning Experiences of Primary School EFL Learners in Thailand from Learners' and Facilitators' Perspectives

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## Abstract

English camps are a creative and engaging approach to language learning, offering a different learning experience from traditional classroom instruction by creating realistic and hands-on learning environments. This study aims to investigate the impact of a one-day English camp on the development of English language learning experiences among primary school students in a province of Thailand. The camp combined Experiential Learning (EL) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) through activities including sentence composition practice, vocabulary games, bingo games, and pronunciation exercises. This ethnographic research was conducted and collected data through student interviews, behavioural observations, and reflection journals, providing in-depth insights into the camp's effects.

The findings are two poles from learners' perspectives and facilitators' perspective. It revealed that both students and facilitators perceived English Camps positive and agreed that it help enhance learner experiences increasing confidence, greater interest in learning, and improved readiness to use English in daily life. In addition, research limitations, and pedagogical implication are latter provided.

**Keywords:** English Camps, EFL, Experiential Learning, Communicative Language Teaching

# บทบาทของค่ายภาษาอังกฤษหนึ่งวันที่มีต่อประสบการณ์การเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศดับประสบศึกษาในประเทศไทยจากมุมมองของผู้เรียนและผู้จัดกิจกรรม

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## บทคัดย่อ

ค่ายภาษาอังกฤษเป็นวิธีการเรียนรู้ภาษาที่สร้างสรรค์และน่าสนใจ ซึ่งมีประสบการณ์การเรียนรู้ที่แตกต่างจากการสอนในห้องเรียนแบบดั้งเดิมโดยการสร้างสภาพแวดล้อมการเรียนรู้ที่สมจริง และเน้นการปฏิบัติจริง การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อตรวจสอบผลกระทบของค่ายภาษาอังกฤษระยะเวลา 1 วันต่อการพัฒนาประสบการณ์การเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียนระดับประสบศึกษาในจังหวัดแห่งหนึ่ง ของประเทศไทย ค่ายดังกล่าวได้นำแนวทางการเรียนรู้ผ่านประสบการณ์ (Experiential Learning: EL) และการสอนภาษาแบบเน้นการสื่อสาร (Communicative Language Teaching: CLT) มาประยุกต์ใช้ ผ่านกิจกรรมต่าง ๆ เช่น การฝึกแต่งประโยค เกมคำศัพท์ เกมบิงโก และการฝึกออกเสียง งานวิจัยเชิงชาติพันธุ์ วรรณนาี้ได้เก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลผ่านการสัมภาษณ์นักเรียน การสังเกตพฤติกรรม และบันทึกการสะท้อน ความคิดเห็น ซึ่งให้ข้อมูลเชิงลึกเกี่ยวกับผลกระทบของค่าย

ผลการศึกษาพบมุมมองที่แตกต่างจากทั้งนักเรียนและผู้ดำเนินกิจกรรม โดยทั้งสองฝ่ายมีทัศนคติ เชิงบวกต่อค่ายภาษาอังกฤษ และเห็นพ้องกันว่าค่ายดังกล่าวช่วยส่งเสริมประสบการณ์การเรียนรู้ เพิ่มความมั่นใจ ความสนใจในการเรียนรู้ และความพร้อมในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในชีวิตประจำวันได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ นอกจากนี้ ยังมีการนำเสนอข้อจำกัดของการวิจัยและข้อเสนอแนะทางการสอนในภายหลัง

**คำสำคัญ:** ค่ายภาษาอังกฤษ, ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ, แนวทางการเรียนรู้ผ่านประสบการณ์, การสอนภาษาแบบเน้นการสื่อสาร

## Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in innovative methods for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Thailand, particularly for young learners, a primetime period to start acquiring second language. The teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Thailand has faced numerous challenges due to traditional practices in classroom, particularly in primary schools located in rural areas. Traditional EFL instruction in these regions often relies on teacher-centred approach and overusing of learners' first language (L1) (Yuh, &Kaewurai, 2021), grammar-translation methods, popularly used in EFL classroom in Thailand (Sittirak, 2015) and rote memorisation, providing few opportunities for students to use English in meaningful, communicative ways (Baker, &Jarunthawatchai, 2017). These methods, while effective in building foundational knowledge, tend to limit students' fluency and confidence, especially when using English outside of the classroom. Moreover, the lack of access to resources, experienced teachers, and English-speaking environments in rural areas further hampers language acquisition, leaving students with limited exposure to authentic language use. As a result, many primary school students in rural areas have struggled for decade to achieve fluency and confidence in using English outside the classroom environment (Wongsothorn, Hiranburana, &Chinnawongs, 2002). More importantly, language fluency is insufficiently supported and promoted (Phisutthangkoon, 2024).

Underpinning these challenges, English camps have emerged as a supplementary strategy, offering a more engaging and practical approach to language learning. It a potential solution, offering a more immersive and interactive environment where students can actively engage in practical language use and develop their skills in a supportive setting with their peers (Aswad, 2017) when teachers, on the other hand, are acting as facilitators. English camps designed for primary school students in rural Thailand are based on principles of Experiential Learning (EL) (Kolb, 1984) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Richards, 2006). These camps create opportunities for students to learn through engaging activities which featured role-playing, group discussions, and language games, where they are exposed to English in real-life contexts. Such immersive experiences are particularly valuable in rural provinces, where access to supplementary English language exposure may be limited. It has been acknowledged that the public local universities play a crucial role in providing academic services in uplifting education standard to neighboring communities, namely collaborative projects, community services.

Experiential Learning (EL) activity is perceived positively among EFL learners as presented in a survey on high school students' perceptions. It revealed that experiential learning activities enabled target students with hands-on, inter-human activities plus

exposing to various sources of content knowledge aside classroom (Viengkham, &Piromjitphong, 2017). Apart from academic contributions, research on EL concept also showed that it enhances learners' qualitative attributes, for instance, boosting learners' self-confidence (Changnoi, &Pathumcharoenwattana, 2016). Similarly, previous research on English camps applying EL principles in other Asian countries, such as South Korea and Taiwan, has shown positive outcomes in terms of students' speaking skills, vocabulary acquisition, and learners' confidence in using English (Noguchi, 2019; Rachmawati, Widjajanti, Ahmad, &Aslan, 2020) as well as positive cultural understanding (Rugasken, &Harris, 2009).

However, there is a lack of focused research exploring the impact of English camps specifically on primary school EFL learners in Thailand. Generally speaking, problems as discussed by recent scholars have still stressed that verbal communication ability of Thai EFL learners are due to motivation, fear of errors, anxiety, and self-confidence (Suthiwartnarueput, &Nutayangkul, 2022), linguistic factors like vocabularies, grammar and pronunciation (Huayluek, 2024; Suthiwartnarueput, &Nutayangkul, 2022), lack of opportunities to use English in daily activities (Tantiwich &Sinwongsuwan, 2021; Ratanapinyowong, Poopon, &Honsa, 2007).

This study aims to address this gap by investigating the role of English camps in enhancing the language learning experiences of primary school EFL learners in a rural province of Thailand. The research focuses on three key aspects: students' perceptions and experiences of the camp, their engagement and behavioral changes during camp activities, and the perspectives of teachers and facilitators on the camp's effectiveness. Using a qualitative approach that includes interviews, observations, and reflection journals, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how English camps can foster language proficiency and promote confidence among young learners in rural areas. The findings are expected to inform educators and policymakers about the potential of English camps as a valuable supplement to traditional EFL instruction in Thailand, especially for those aiming to improve language education in under-resourced regions with emphasis on collaboration with higher education institute.

English camps are designed to immerse students in an interactive, real-world learning environment, drawing on principles of Experiential Learning (EL) (Kolb, 1984) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Richards, 2006). Unlike traditional classrooms, English camps use activities such as role-playing, games, and group discussions to promote language use in everyday contexts, fostering both linguistic competence and cultural understanding. This aligns with the core idea of experiential learning, where students gain knowledge through direct experience and reflection, leading to deeper retention and understanding of language skills. The CLT approach further supports this by emphasising the importance of meaningful communication and practical language use outside the

formalities of a classroom (Blackton, & McCaughey, 2024). Previous studies in other Asian contexts, such as Noguchi (2019) in Japan and Rachmawati, Widjajanti, Ahmad, & Aslan, (2020) in Indonesia, have highlighted the positive effects of English camps on learners' speaking abilities, vocabulary acquisition, and confidence. However, the impact of such camps on primary school EFL learners in Thailand's rural regions remains underexplored, particularly in terms of how these immersive experiences can address the unique challenges faced by young learners in these areas.

Understanding the role of English camps in language acquisition among young EFL learners is crucial, especially considering the critical period for language development in primary school students (Lightbown, & Spada, 2013). At this stage, early exposure to engaging and interactive language experiences can significantly enhance learners' motivation and confidence. Research suggests that activities tailored to young learners' interests can lead to greater engagement and positive attitudes towards language learning, making the informal and supportive environment of English camps particularly effective (Krashen, 1982). Additionally, evaluating the impact of English camps requires a focus on qualitative aspects, such as changes in students' confidence and willingness to communicate, which can be captured through interviews, observations, and reflection journals. The facilitators play a critical role in this process, as their perspectives provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of camp activities and students' progress. Despite the promising outcomes reported in other contexts, there is a clear need for studies that specifically address how English camps can be applied to the unique needs of primary EFL learners in Thailand's rural areas, making this research essential for informing future educational strategies and policies.

### **Research Objectives**

This qualitative study aims to explore experiences of EFL learners and the English camps facilitators concerning perception on implementing the one-day English camp. To do so, the following research questions shall be posed:

1. What are the perceptions and experiences of primary EFL learners regarding their participation in the English camp?
2. What are the perspectives of the English camp facilitators on the effectiveness of the English camp in improving students' language skills and confidence?

### **Research Design**

This study employs ethnographic research design (Cresswell, & Cresswell, 2023) to qualitatively explore natural inquiry of the roles of a one-day English camp in enhancing

the language learning experiences of primary school EFL learners in a rural province of central Thailand. The qualitative approach is chosen to gain in-depth insights into students' experiences, behavioural changes, and the perspectives of teachers and facilitators during this compact timeframe.

### **Research Methods**

This study employs a four-step methodological approach, which includes the development of instructional materials, a pilot study, data collection, and data analysis with result reporting. More details are given in the following section.

#### **1. Development of Instructional Materials**

The instructional materials for the one-day English camp were designed using principles of Experiential Learning (EL) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The camp featured seven stations, each offering targeted language activities such as vocabulary games, sentence construction, and pronunciation practice. The goal was to create an engaging, multi-sensory learning environment that facilitated practical language use and boosted learner confidence.

#### **2. Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted to ensure that the instructional materials and research instruments were aligned with the study's objectives. The materials were reviewed by a panel of three experts in English language teaching and curriculum design through an Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) assessment. This process ensured that the materials were pedagogically sound and appropriate for young EFL learners. The feedback gathered from this review was used to refine the materials and research instruments before the camp was conducted.

#### **3. Data Collection**

The one-day English camp was held at a public primary school located in a province in central Thailand in January 2024. The camp ran from 9-16 hrs. with one hour lunch break and fifteen-minutes break in the morning and afternoon period. Participants were forty primary school students aged 8-11, selected based on their varying levels of English proficiency. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and reflection journals. Student interviews were carried out immediately after the camp to capture their experiences and perceptions while facilitator interviews took place on the following day. Observations of student engagement and behaviour were conducted throughout the camp, while reflection journals provided students the opportunity to self-assess their progress at the end of the day.

#### 4. Data Analysis and Result Reporting

The collected data were analysed using a thematic analysis approach. The interview transcripts, observation notes, and reflection journals were coded to identify recurring themes related to students' language use, confidence, and engagement. The results were then synthesised to address the study's research questions, highlighting key findings such as increased confidence, high levels of engagement, and practical improvements in language learning experiences. These findings were reported with supporting evidence, offering insights into the overall effectiveness of the English camp.

#### Participants and Samples

The participants in this study include three hundred EFL learners, aged between 8-11 years, enrolled in a public school located in a province of central Thailand. The school is approximately seventy kilometres far from the province centre where the host university is located and two hundred thirty kilometres far from Thailand's capital city, Bangkok. The school apparently well represent the educational challenges faced in rural areas, such as limited resources for English learning and fewer opportunities for language immersion outside the classroom. The study also involves facilitators who are directly responsible for the English camp as instructors and observers.

The study employs a convenient sampling technique to select participants who are best positioned to provide relevant insights into the research questions. To do this, forty primary school students out of three hundred as shown in table 1 were selected from among those who participate in the English camp, considering 13.34 percent ensuring a balance of different levels of English proficiency and willingness to communicate and appropriate for qualify data to meet research questions (Creswell, &Poth, 2016). This selection aims to include a diverse range of experiences and attitudes towards English learning. The sample size is chosen to ensure depth in data collection while remaining manageable for the detailed analysis required in a qualitative study.

In addition, facilitators who have experience in delivering English instruction in a camp setting will be included as key informants. Their selection is based on their direct involvement in the camp and their ability to provide observations on student progress and the effectiveness of camp activities. The purposive sampling of facilitators ensures that those who have a comprehensive understanding of the camp's objectives and activities contribute to the study's findings.

**Table 1** Participants and Samples

Subject	Numbers	Percent
Participant	300	100
Samples	40	13.34

### Instrumentation

The instructional materials for the one-day English camp were specifically designed to address the language learning needs of primary EFL learners in a dynamic and engaging manner. Drawing on the principles of Experiential Learning (EL) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), each set of materials was tailored to provide targeted practice opportunities across various aspects of language, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and sentence construction. The camp featured seven distinct learning stations, each equipped with interactive materials that encouraged active participation and practical language use. These materials, such as word cards, verb charts, bingo games, and fortune stick, were designed to create a multi-sensory learning environment, helping students to connect spoken, written, and visual forms of English. This approach aimed to maximise engagement and support learners in developing both confidence and competence in using English in a supportive and culturally relevant setting.

### Instructional Materials and Station Design for the English Camp

The instructional materials for the English camp were carefully designed to cater to the diverse language learning needs of primary EFL learners. Each station within the camp focused on a specific aspect of language learning, providing targeted practice opportunities that complemented the overall immersive environment. The camp featured seven stations, each equipped with materials and activities designed to engage students in hands-on, communicative learning experiences. These stations were tailored to encourage active participation and foster practical language use, aligning with the principles of Experiential Learning (EL) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

#### Station 1: Word Cards

This station utilised word cards featuring vocabulary items that aligned with students' everyday experiences and the camp's thematic content. The aim was to build students' word recognition skills and expand their lexical knowledge. Activities included matching games and rapid vocabulary drills, encouraging students to engage with new words through play-based interaction. The word cards served as a visual and tactile aid, helping students connect the spoken and written forms of the vocabulary.

### **Station 2: Tenses**

The focus at this station was on understanding and applying basic verb tenses, such as present, past, and future. Instructional materials included visual timelines and verb charts, which helped students visualise the use of tenses in context. Activities included sentence construction exercises and interactive storytelling, where students practiced forming sentences in different tenses based on prompts. This station aimed to strengthen students' grammar skills in a practical, context-driven manner.

### **Station 3: Bingo Game**

Using a bingo game format, this station emphasised vocabulary related to food and meals, an area of interest for many primary learners. The bingo cards featured images and words, allowing students to match spoken words with their corresponding pictures. This station integrated listening and reading skills, encouraging students to recognise food vocabulary quickly while maintaining a fun, competitive atmosphere that motivated active participation.

### **Station 4: Vocabulary Card and Whiteboard**

At this station, students used vocabulary cards alongside a whiteboard for interactive writing activities. Students were prompted to draw connections between words, write short sentences, and create word associations on the whiteboard. This exercise helped reinforce spelling and writing skills while providing a space for collaborative learning. The visual nature of the whiteboard allowed students to see their progress and build confidence in their ability to write in English.

### **Station 5: Fortune Stick**

Fortune stick, known in Thai as 'Seam-si', inspired by a traditional Thai game, was adapted to reinforce vocabulary learning in a fun and culturally relevant way. Students drew slips with words and had to use those words in sentences or stories. This station allowed students to integrate new vocabulary into speech, fostering both creativity and fluency in a relaxed, game-like setting. The cultural adaptation helped bridge familiar gameplay with English learning, making the activity accessible and engaging.

### **Station 6: Writing Sentences**

This station focused on constructing sentences, with materials such as sentence strips and fill-in-the-blank exercises. Students were guided through writing simple to complex sentences, gradually building their confidence in composing coherent ideas. The hands-on materials provided structure for students while allowing flexibility to experiment with their sentence creation, encouraging a practical approach to written communication in English.

### Station 7: Pronunciation Practice

The pronunciation station was equipped with audio aids and visual articulation guides, aimed at helping students improve their pronunciation of challenging sounds. Activities included listening and repeating exercises, phonetic matching games, and use of mirrors to observe mouth movements. This station was designed to boost students' confidence in speaking and ensure that they could articulate words more accurately, which is often a challenge in EFL contexts.

### Instructional Approach and Impact

Each station was designed with a clear instructional goal, providing students with opportunities to practise different language skills in focused, engaging activities. The use of varied materials such as word cards, visual aids, and interactive games allowed for multi-sensory learning experiences, appealing to different learning styles. This strategic design ensured that the camp catered to both the linguistic and motivational needs of the learners, making the activities more effective in fostering language acquisition. Through these hands-on, activity-based stations, students were able to engage with the language in practical contexts, facilitating a more meaningful and lasting impact on their English language development.

### Pilot Study

The development and validation of the instructional materials and research instruments for the English camp were guided by an Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) assessment, aimed at ensuring that all elements of the study were aligned with its objectives of enhancing language learning experiences among primary EFL learners. The IOC process involved a panel of three experts in the field of English language teaching and curriculum design, selected to provide a balanced and comprehensive evaluation. This panel included one expert from a private university and two from public universities, ensuring a diverse range of academic perspectives. The expert from the private university contributed insights into innovative pedagogical approaches and interactive learning strategies, while the experts from the public universities offered critical feedback on the alignment of both the instructional materials and research instruments, such as semi-structured interview guides, observation checklists, and reflection journal prompts, with national educational standards and their relevance for young learners in rural Thai contexts. This thorough review process ensured that the instructional materials, as well as the research instruments, were both methodologically

sound and effective in achieving the desired learning outcomes and data integrity for the English camp study.

### Item-Objective Congruence (IOC)

The development and validation of the instructional materials and research instruments for the English camp were guided by an Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) assessment. This process involved a panel of three experts in the field of English language teaching and curriculum design, selected to provide a balanced and comprehensive evaluation (Table 2). The purpose of the IOC was to ensure that all instructional materials, research design, and research instruments were aligned with the study's objectives of enhancing language learning experiences among primary EFL learners.

**Table 2** Experts' Profile

Expert	Affiliation	Age	Education	Area of Expertise
1	Private University	43	M.A. (English)	English Language Teaching, Active Learning
2	Private School	33	M.A. (TESOL)	Curriculum Design, Edutainment, English for Specific Purposes
3	Public University	32	M.A. (TEFL)	Instructional Material Development Qualitative Research

The experts reviewed the materials and instruments based on their expertise, focusing on the clarity, relevance, and suitability for young learners in a rural Thai context. Each expert rated the congruence between the objectives and items on a scale ranging from -1 (not congruent), 0 (uncertain), to 1 (congruent) (Table 3).

**Table 3** IOC Results from Three Experts

Questions	Expert	Expert	Expert	Mean
	1	2	3	Score
Materials: Are the instructional materials suitable for learners with different abilities?	1	1	1	1.00
Materials: Do the activities promote active engagement and interaction?	1	1	0	0.67

**Table 3** IOC Results from Three Experts

Questions	Expert	Expert	Expert	Mean
	1	2	3	Score
Research Design: Is the design appropriate for assessing the impact of the camp on language learning	1	0	1	0.67
Research Instruments: Are the interview questions suitable for capturing student reflections?	1	1	1	1.00
Research Instruments: Do the observation checklists effectively track changes in student engagement and confidence?	1	1	0	0.67

The overall IOC scores indicate a strong alignment between the study's objectives and the materials, research design, and instruments used. The instructional materials were rated as highly inclusive and suitable for promoting active engagement among students with diverse learning abilities. However, there was some uncertainty regarding the extent to which specific activities could consistently maintain active interaction for all students, as reflected in Expert 3's rating. The research design was also rated positively, though one expert suggested that additional considerations might be needed to fully capture the camp's impact. The research instruments, including interview questions and observation checklists, were deemed appropriate for evaluating the students' reflections and engagement, ensuring that the data collected would be relevant and aligned with the study's aims. These findings led to minor revisions to enhance clarity and consistency, further ensuring the effectiveness of the materials and instruments in achieving the research objectives.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection process is designed to capture the impact of the English camp, which took place over a single day from 9-16 hrs. in January 2024, in a province located in central Thailand. Each instrument and its methods are addressed in the following section.

#### **Semi-structured Interviews:**

Student Interviews: Immediately following the camp, individual interviews will be conducted with the forty selected students to capture their reflections on the

day's activities, challenges, and perceived improvements. Sampled participants were randomly and equally assigned to four interviewers, the researchers, who share mutual understanding in research questions and aims of the research. Each interview will be held at the school, allowing students to express their thoughts while the experience is still fresh in their minds.

In addition, teacher and Facilitator Interviews were conducted the day after the camp to allow them time to reflect on the day's events and student progress. These interviews focused on the observed impact of the camp activities on students' language learning experiences and confidence and were recorded and transcribed for detailed analysis.

#### **Participant Observation:**

Observations took place throughout the duration of the one-day camp, capturing students' interactions during each scheduled activity. Structured observation checklists will be used to record behaviours such as enthusiasm in participation, willingness to use English, and peer interaction. Field notes will be taken to provide additional context, capturing nuances such as group dynamics and individual student responses during key moments of the day, like role-playing exercises or group discussions.

#### **Reflection Journals:**

At the start of the camp, each participant received a small notebook to use for notetaking throughout the day's activities. Students were encouraged to jot down observations, new vocabulary, and personal reflections as they moved through the various learning stations. This method aimed to foster active engagement and continuous reflection.

At the end of the day, students were asked to review their notes and complete a reflection journal, summarising their experiences. This process allowed them to critically assess their learning, identifying what they enjoyed, the challenges they faced, and the language skills they developed. The journals provided valuable insights into students' progress, highlighting increased confidence in using English and identifying areas where further practice was needed. The structured reflection process, supported by their notes, helped reinforce the learning objectives of the camp. It also offered qualitative data on how students interacted with the camp's activities, showing the potential impact of immersive, hands-on language learning in enhancing their overall English proficiency.

### Data analysis

The data analysis process for this study follows a qualitative thematic analysis approach, designed to address the three main research questions regarding the impact of the one-day English camp for primary EFL learners in a central Thai province. The analysis focuses on understanding (1) students' perceptions and experiences, (2) their engagement and behavioural changes during camp activities, and (3) teachers' and facilitators' perspectives on the camp's effectiveness. To explore students' perceptions and experiences, data from semi-structured interviews and reflection journals will be transcribed verbatim and coded using open coding. This initial coding process will identify recurring themes such as "**increased confidence in speaking**," "**challenges with vocabulary**," and "**enjoyment of specific activities**." These themes will reveal how students perceived their learning experiences and the specific aspects of the camp they found most impactful.

For analysing changes in student engagement and behaviour, data from participant observations will be reviewed. The structured observation checklists and detailed field notes, recorded throughout the camp day, will be coded to capture patterns in student interactions, willingness to use English, and levels of enthusiasm during activities. This analysis will focus on identifying shifts in behaviour and confidence, providing insights into how the camp environment influenced students' willingness to participate and use English actively.

The second research question, which seeks to understand facilitators' perspectives, will be analysed through the thematic analysis of interview transcripts from teachers and facilitators. Their insights into students' progress, the effectiveness of different activities, and the overall impact of the camp will be coded to identify themes like "**observed improvement in speaking skills**" and "**effectiveness of role-playing exercises**." Comparing these perspectives with student data will allow for a deeper understanding of the camp's strengths and areas for improvement.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, a triangulation method will be employed, comparing data across all sources—student interviews, reflection journals, observations, and teacher interviews. This cross-referencing advocates themes, address any discrepancies, and provide a nuanced understanding of the camp's impact. Finally, a narrative synthesis will be conducted, weaving together the identified themes with direct quotes from participants to create a comprehensive explanation of how the one-day camp influenced students' language skills, engagement, and confidence. This synthesis will directly address the two research questions, offering evidence-based insights into the role of English camps in enhancing language learning among primary EFL learners in Thailand's rural regions.

## Results

The following results will be divided into two parts according to the research questions including students' perspective, and the facilitators' perspective toward the implementation of the one-day English camp.

### Students' Perspective

Results presented in the below section responds the first research question, '**what are the perceptions and experiences of primary EFL learners regarding their participation in the English camp?**'. There are three key themes that highlight the camp's positive impact on primary EFL learners in a rural Thai context:

#### **Theme 1: Enhancing Confidence in Using English**

A significant outcome of the camp was the increase in students' confidence, particularly in their willingness to use English in various activities. Students who were initially hesitant to speak began participating more actively in role-playing and group discussions, which provided a supportive environment for them to take linguistic risks. The below reflections illustrate how the camp's interactive, low-pressure activities created a conducive environment for students to build their confidence in using English.

*Albert (Male), "At first, I was nervous about speaking, but after practicing with my friends in the games, I felt more comfortable and started speaking more."*

*Beth (Female), "I used to avoid speaking English, but now I feel like I can ask questions and talk more easily."*

#### **Theme 2: High Levels of Student Engagement and Enthusiasm**

The camp's use of immersive and playful activities significantly increased student engagement. The gamified learning approach, incorporating vocabulary games and role-playing, captured students' attention and made learning English more enjoyable. The following excerpts reflect how the experiential learning model effectively motivated students and sustained their enthusiasm throughout the camp, making language learning a more dynamic and enjoyable experience.

*Clark (Male), "The games made learning fun. I wanted to participate because it felt like a competition, and I was excited to win."*

*Dennis (Female), "I didn't think learning English could be this fun. I was more interested because the activities were like playing games."*

#### **Theme 3: Improvement in Practical Language Skills**

Teachers and facilitators observed notable progress in students' vocabulary use, sentence construction, and willingness to apply new language skills in practical

contexts. The structured yet interactive tasks provided opportunities for students to experiment with language in meaningful ways. The following reflections demonstrate how the camp's focus on practical language use, through hands-on activities, helped students integrate new vocabulary and sentence structures into their speech, thereby improving their overall language proficiency.

**Ellie (Female),** "I learned how to make sentences about places like the hospital and shopping mall, and now I feel confident using these words in real life."

**Freya (Female),** "I learned new words and could use them to describe things around me, which helped me feel more confident speaking English."

These themes collectively illustrate the potential of short-term, immersive programmes like English camps to significantly enhance language learning outcomes for young EFL learners. The increased confidence, engagement, and practical skill development observed among participants suggest that English camps can serve as a valuable supplement to conventional EFL instruction, offering students the opportunity to apply their language skills in real-world scenarios. The findings of this study contribute to the broader discourse on innovative approaches to EFL education, suggesting that even brief, intensive interventions can have lasting positive effects on students' language proficiency and attitudes towards learning English.

### **Facilitators' Perspectives**

Results presented in the below section discuss the second research question, '**what are the perspectives of the English camp facilitators on the effectiveness of the English camp in improving students' language skills and confidence?**'. There are two themes, and four sub-themes emerged from the interview transcript in the facilitators interview panel.

#### **Theme 1: Production process**

While participating in the English camp stations, learners are encouraged to produce target utterances both verbal and written according to the stations. There are two sub themes classified as different interactions elicited by the students from the facilitators' perspectives.

##### **Sub theme 1.1: Comfortability with Prompts**

The facilitators reflected that young students were dependent on prompts, objects in hands while processing the input and producing verbal utterances.

**Graham:** What I've observed was that students almost felt at ease and eager to produce utterances especially station 4: Vocabulary Card and Whiteboard. They had some time to process and prepare their productions. It's probably

because they had to compete with other students under time constraints and rewards to be given.

#### **Sub theme 1.2: Struggle and Hesitation**

In relation to the comfortability mentioned above, some outperforming students, while visualising the prompt, uttered the words in Thai, the meaning to that of the prompt, before speaking out the target English vocabularies in the station 1: word card, and station 5: fortune stick. **Henry: The outperforming girl in grade three spoke the target word almost right after she got the fortune stick. Surprisingly, it was not English.**

### **Theme 2: Fun and Excitement**

Most facilitators agree that students were joyful and having fun in participating each station. Regardless of crowded venue and unsupportive technical devices. There are two sub themes classified as fun and excitement elicited by the students from the facilitators' perspectives.

#### **Sub theme 2.1: Learner Autonomy**

It is underpinned that learner's autonomy in foreign language learning plays major parts in self-development, flipped learning environments, and so on.

**Isabella: I could see the changes in students' behaviour and confidence. This directly helps enhance their learning autonomy, especially foreign language learning.**

**Jessica: I find fun and excitement are major emerging effects in the English camp. This is aligned with the methods of the activities. Especially the stations were game-based activities like bingo game in station 3. Almost all students know what bingo is. It's not that hard to apply the game to foreign language learning.**

#### **Sub theme 2.2: Academic Condense**

**Katherine: There are multiple variables and conditions you may see, time control, station allocation and management which directly involve event management. The English Camp by nature is entertainment purpose, so yes, we enhance students' engagement to language classroom in the future, but for academic, I am unsure.**

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The findings of this study highlight the significant roles of the one-day, intensive English camps in improving the language skills of primary EFL learners in Thailand. The camp's emphasis on Experiential Learning (EL) through activities such as role-playing and vocabulary games allowed students to engage in meaningful communication,

resulting in noticeable improvements in their speaking confidence and willingness to use English. This aligns with the principles of Experiential Learning (EL), with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which prioritise authentic language use in real-world contexts. Additionally, the positive responses from both students and facilitators suggested that even brief, immersive interventions can create a supportive environment that motivates students to take linguistic risks and practise their skills outside of the traditional classrooms. In addition, it helps increase fluency while reducing foreign language anxiety (Akwaree, &Kulsirisawad, 2018), and greatly encourages life experiences and learning motivation as suggested by Hui, &Yunus (2023). Such results underscore the value of integrating interactive language activities into EFL curricula to create more engaging and effective learning experiences for young learners which empower young EFL learners to change in the interest of foreign language learning as addressed by Aswad (2017). Next, foreign language retention is in addition and aligned with fluency the learners may have acquired through activities designed in English camp stations as most of activities are student-centred, resulting in self-motivation, and encouragement from their peers (Inada, 2023).

On the other hand, However, the effectiveness of the camp was not without challenges. ELT practitioners may find that implementing English camp is challenging as elicited in the finding presented above that learners' first language (L1) strongly influence L2 production (sub theme 1.2: struggle and hesitation). While retention and sustainability in L2 input has been emphasised and spotlighted to, issues concerning language exposure and classroom experience may have resolved with English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), the use of English as a medium of instruction which has become a growing global phenomenon suggesting that of all levels of proficiency. Implementing EMI in classroom can be applied with systematic and methodological approach in educational contexts concerning qualitative attributes of both learners and teachers, methodologies, resources, guidelines for teaching, and the policies age (Dearden, 2016).

In addition to L1 influences, limitations in facilities and the experience level of facilitators have also influenced the overall learning environment. The physical comfort of students during the camp day, influenced by issues such as air conditioning and venue infrastructure, could have affected their ability to concentrate fully during activities. Furthermore, the facilitators' limited teaching experience may have impacted the depth and consistency of feedback provided to students, which is a crucial component of language learning. Despite these challenges, the positive outcomes observed suggest that English camps can be a valuable supplement to traditional EFL instruction, particularly in contexts where students have limited access to English-speaking environments outside of school.

Qualitative result aligned with the findings in the systematic reviews on CLT approach teaching ESL speaking (Hui, & Yunus, 2023) to extent that EFL learners views the methods positively enhance their language learning. This effort belongs to EFL teachers to create fun learning activities to promote learners' speaking opportunities.

To summarise, English Camp in young EFL learners have elicited positive result contributing that learners feel at ease in developing both linguistic competence and qualitative attributes toward their learning experience. Boosting up their confidence is even an ultimate goal of all ELT teachers they may have done in classroom. Therefore, their fellow learners are likely to be able to perform and express their performance outside classroom in realistic settings.

### **Implications**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations can guide curriculum developers and school directors in effectively implementing English camps to enhance students' language learning experiences.

To effectively implement English camps in schools, curriculum developers and school directors should integrate these programs as supplementary activities within the existing curriculum, ensuring alignment with annual events or extracurricular activities to provide systematic exposure to language learning. Facilitators should receive professional training on experiential learning (EL) and communicative language teaching (CLT) methodologies to design engaging and inclusive activities, such as vocabulary games, pronunciation drills, and sentence composition challenges, catering to varying proficiency levels. Collaborative efforts with parents, local communities, and educational authorities can provide additional resources and support, while incorporating digital tools like language learning apps and virtual reality can enhance engagement and offer dynamic learning experiences. Establishing robust feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and interviews, allows for continuous improvement and ensures that the camp addresses students' needs. Extending the camp duration in future implementations could deepen immersion and lead to more sustained language development. Finally, creating a positive and supportive environment, where students feel encouraged to participate without fear of mistakes, is essential for fostering confidence, promoting interest, and enhancing readiness to use English in everyday contexts.

### **Limitations**

This study presents valuable insights into the impact of a short-term English camp; however, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the one-day duration limits

the ability to assess long-term language improvement. Future research could explore multi-day camps to evaluate sustained language development. Second, the sample size of forty students, though sufficient for qualitative analysis, restricts the generalisability of findings. Testing larger groups of students simultaneously presented logistical challenges, making it impractical to control the reliability and validity of formal assessments across such many participants. This reliance on qualitative data limits the study's ability to provide precise, quantifiable results.

Additionally, facilitators with limited teaching experience may have impacted the depth of feedback provided to students. More experienced educators could have enhanced the instructional quality. Lastly, logistical constraints, such as suboptimal facilities, may have affected student focus, limiting the overall effectiveness of the immersive learning environment. Future studies should address these limitations by expanding the sample size, improving facilitator expertise, and incorporating more controlled testing conditions to ensure reliable, long-term evaluation of language outcomes.

### **Suggestions for Future Researchers**

Future research should explore the long-term impact of similar English camps, extending the study period to include follow-up evaluations of language proficiency several months after the camp. This would help determine whether the gains in confidence and language use observed in the short term are maintained over time. Researchers could also examine the effectiveness of multi-day or weekend camps, comparing them to the one-day model to assess whether a longer duration yields greater improvements. Additionally, future studies could focus on training and supporting facilitators more comprehensively, ensuring that those leading the camps have the skills needed to provide high-quality, individualised feedback to students. Such enhancements could maximise the potential of English camps as a tool for advancing EFL education in Thailand and other similar contexts, contributing to a more evidence-based approach in language teaching practices.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to ensure the well-being and rights of all participants. First, the development of instructional materials was carefully designed to be inclusive, ensuring that students of all preferences, learning abilities, and physical limitations could access and enjoy the activities. The learning stations and tasks were tailored to promote equal participation, providing a supportive environment for students with diverse needs. Second, all sampled participants were fully informed of their rights

prior to the data collection sessions. They were made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences. Furthermore, participants were assured that their identities would remain strictly confidential. No identifying information would be published or disclosed without their explicit consent, ensuring that their privacy was fully protected throughout the research process.

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