

Research Article

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH LEARNING THROUGH ENGLISH CAMP AT PRINCESS UBOLRATANA RAJAKANYA'S COLLEGE PHATTHALUNG

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Abstract

This survey study examined the junior high school students' attitudes towards their English learning, after participating the English Language Camp, at Princess Ubolratana Rajakanya's College Phatthalung. The samples were 75 students from grade 10 to 12 selected by Krejcie & Morgan's sampling formula with the confidence of 99 percent and 1 percent of margin of error. The quantitative data were collected through a five-point Likert Scale questionnaire, containing 10 items and with the reliability at $\alpha \geq 0.837$, while the section of open opinions was also used to gather the qualitative data. To analyze the obtained data, the SPSS statistical software was used and mainly focused on the descriptive statistics. The study revealed that the level of students' attitudes towards their English learning was overall high at 4.2, with the standard deviation error at .04. The female students reflected a slightly higher mean at 4.2 than male students at 4.1, and the younger students were almost commensurate the mean at 4.3 with the older ones at 4.2. For the content analysis, students offered positive opinions; for example, the English Camp emboldened them to learn English faster and perceive the importance of English.

Keywords: Attitudes, English Camp, English Learning

Introduction

The English language plays a very crucial role for everyone as a dominant global language in the 21st century. For more than 1,750 million people use English as their second language for education, business communication, diplomatic ties, exchanging culture, tourism etc.; and it is anticipated that, by 2020, the number of users will reach higher than 2 billion (British Council, 2018). The English language has already become the global main language for all countries over the world without doubt. In Thailand, English has been pervasively used for a very long time since Thailand opened its country to the international community; when the communication in English between Thailand and other nations is reached higher, the requirement of English has also relevantly increased, especially in the sector of education. The Thai Ministry of Education has implemented the English language on the curriculum of all levels of education in Thailand ranged from the primary schools to the higher education. This is because the stakeholders on education expect Thai students to have higher English proficiency as students in other nations. To do this, it is not just about enhancing Thai students to have more fluent English skills for their daily communication; it is also about to increase the competitiveness of the nation on the world's community stage (Thai Ministry of Education, 2008).

The process of teaching English, according to the Thai Ministry of Education, in Thailand is normally conducted through the binary practices. These practices can be conducted either in normal teaching and learning in a classroom or through extra curriculum activities outside a classroom, for example, students' exchanged program between Thai schools and foreign schools, hiring more English speaking teachers, reducing time of classes, and increasing time for learning, "Moderate Class More Knowledge," which has been implemented recently (Thai Ministry of Education, 2016). However, running an academic camp, a summer camp, or an English camp can be pervasively seen in many schools both in private and public ones. Sometimes it is hyped up as a seasonal activity for many schools where students can participate and develop their English skills and have enjoyment. According to International Schools Thailand (2018), the English camp becomes a fashionable trend known among parents and students because they will get directly involved to such event as an annual festival throughout the country in a relaxed and enjoyable circumstances.

With these all affords to develop Thai students' English proficiency through various kinds of activities; on the one hand, it is a direct practice of increasing students' language skills, but on the other hand it is a silent or socially psychological practice of building up awareness or motivation for students to realize the importance of English (Clement, 1994, pp. 417-448). In fact, it is the important process of

shaping students' attitudes towards the English language, especially for those who recognize English as a difficult subject. Rukh (2014, pp. 5596-5612) pointed out that students who had positive attitudes towards English could signify their confidence in expressing themselves, and such confidence is always associated with their academic achievement as well. As a result, when students perceive English positively, their performances of English in both the classroom and for outside activities should be outstanding. Similarly, when low-achieving students are encouraged to play greater effort on their English class, the learning achievement can be easily found (Swatevacharkul, 2016, pp. 22-32). Therefore, the researchers are interested in examining the junior high school students in a local area as to survey their attitudes about English learning after taking part the English Camp at Princess Ubolratana Rajakanya's College Phatthalung.

Related Works

English Camp

To learn English faster and effectively, the most appropriate technique is probably to learn it in an English-speaking country or in English-speaking environment. This will encourage, in particular, young people and people to make the acquisition of the English language faster than the elder generation (Twin Training International, 2018). Although other kinds of communicative language teaching activities in a normal class of schools are important to increase students' English proficiency such listening and speaking skills (Thanakong & Adipattaranan, 2017, pp. 51-64), an English camp is also another best alternative. An English camp usually offers plenty of great and wonderful activities for young people who are seeking for opportunities to practice their English skills, and they will have more chances to make new friends, learn, and enjoy other cultures through both constructively exciting outdoor and indoor activities. At present, the so-called English camp or sometimes called English language learning camp is widely organized by both private and public sectors in many countries all over the world; for example, "English theme park", in South Korea, is established to set up the environment for young Korean students to have experiences and learn English as if they are in an English speaking country — many more similar camps are being constructed nationwide (Mitchell, 2006, p. 1). The reason is that South Korean students are facing with lacking experiences in using English in their daily lives; and these kinds of camps also help the government to prevent a great number of students to leave their mother land to study at English speaking countries (Park, 2006, pp. 91-115). Insisted by Lee, he suggested that "the English Village" is perceived "as a fascinating sociocultural site which political, economic, pedagogical, and linguistic instantiations of globalization coexist" (Lee, 2011, p. 125).

In addition, the English Camp is occasionally tied up with the curriculum of a program or syllabus of a course. According to Ismail and Tahir (2011, p. 62), "the English Camp program is designed so as to allow TESL students to master English language learning in an authentic natural learning environment which they are not able to gain during the normal study duration." Thus, the students will be able to improve and master English language learning through different atmosphere where the schools or universities are unable to provide theme as in their real-life situations (Behzadi & Sayadian, 2015, pp. 54-66). Rugasken and Jacqueline (2009, pp. 43-51) reiterated that the English camp is not only beneficial for students to learn English, but the camp can provide space for participants to learn each other as well, especially in cultural dimensions; and the number of times that the students interact with English speakers will enhance their English language proficiency. This is because the main objective of the camp is to motivate students to improve their communicative English skill. The language camp, with different group of people as a multi-cultural family, will enrich students' authentic language experiences; furthermore, the English camp can be also beneficial to local teachers who will be able to learn new teaching methods for teaching English from other English teachers, according to (Wighting, et al., 2005, pp. 85-108).

Attitude and motivation about English Language

The spreading of the use of English has been driven by many factors. One of the most prominent factors is the increase of its number of users who are required to be fluent in a job market. In the European union, for example, the English language is used as a lingua franca for cross-border communication; while, in Thailand, native English speakers are always welcomed in the educational sector or teaching. With the requirement of English worldwide nowadays, it is undeniable to mention about the attitudes of users or learners towards this language. Attitude, in general, is meant a stance in which a person has a reflection to a specific thing such as an object and event, and it is expressed in forms of positive or negative responses (Ajzen, 1988). Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) also clarified that attitudes play a key role on individual's behavior, and when a person has vivid attitudes towards one thing, her or his patterns of behavior will be influenced. For a language perspective, it is a personal opinion about a language that is constructed through experiences because it is used to explains the behavior of users to a language in terms of linguistic behavior (Mamun, et al. 2012, pp. 200-209); users may perceive that the English language can be helpful for them to lift up their social status and self-development. In fact, such behavior can be either expressed negatively or positively. However, the positive attitude towards using a language can be somebody's motivation of perfecting that language as well. According to Shirbagi

(2010, pp. 1-14), both the attitude and motivation are crucial factors in learning a foreign language --in a psychological viewpoint. A study conducted by Mamun, et al. (2012, pp. 200-209) suggested that students who have a positive attitude about the English language could be ideally motivated their learning. The attitude is an essential subject to develop a language fluency as a tool of motivation for language learning. The students who are successful in learning a target language are usually those who admire that language and adapt themselves to be familiar with it (Falk, 1978). Hence, the language learning achievement of an individual of a target language should be a result of having the positive attitude towards that language. The more positive attitudes a person has, the more proficiency of the target language is supposed to be that is, it is a significant correlation between attitude and motivation of a person towards that language. Chee Choy and Troudi (2006, p. 121) claimed that “positive attitudes and better overall motivation generally results in better proficiency.” And, seemingly, the attitudes towards English learning will be more positively increased into a greater degree in a college or university when students are required to use more English for their classes or schools, according to Chee Choy and Troudi (2006, p. 121).

In brief, running English camp for the English language learning can motivate students to improve their learning because English camp provides activities that will respond to their interest and ability. Aswad (2017) addressed that students’ feeling of understanding and concentration of language learning will be enabled during joining English camp.

Objective

To examine students’ English learning attitudes through English camp activity.

Methodologies

Collecting data

A set of five-point Likert scale questionnaire which is designed into two parts is used to collect the data: part one with 10 items of statements, and part two with the open opinion section. The statements of the questionnaire are evaluated by three expert reviewers through a standardized evaluation form for the first round while the Cronbach's Alpha is also used to inspect the reliability at $\alpha \geq 0.837$.

Population

The total number of participants is 75 junior high school students studying at Princess Ubolratana Rajakanya's College, Phatthalung Province, on grade 10-12. They are all used as the sources of samples for this study.

Research Criteria

The research will be conducted and relied upon the data collected by the questionnaire. The data will be calculated into statistics, and a description of the data is also provided.

Analyzing Data

To analyze the obtained data, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) will be used by focusing on the descriptive statistics: frequency, percentage, mean, maximum and minimum, and standard derivation, while the data of the open opinion section will be described. Furthermore, the ages and genders of participants will be exclusively focused in order to provide more detailed information.

Findings

Part I: The key points of findings from the study focused on the descriptive statistics are demonstrated as the following set of information.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics (Descriptive Statistics of Students' Opinions)

Statement	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std.	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
1	75	2.00	3.00	5.00	346.00	4.6133	.06265	.54260
2	75	2.00	3.00	5.00	317.00	4.2267	.07728	.66927
3	75	2.00	3.00	5.00	328.00	4.3733	.06514	.56409
4	75	3.00	2.00	5.00	304.00	4.0533	.07802	.67570
5	75	2.00	3.00	5.00	301.00	4.0133	.08381	.72584
6	75	2.00	3.00	5.00	326.00	4.3467	.07472	.64710
7	75	2.00	3.00	5.00	326.00	4.3467	.07227	.62587
8	75	3.00	2.00	5.00	307.00	4.0933	.08312	.71986
9	75	2.00	3.00	5.00	313.00	4.1733	.06942	.60120
10	75	2.00	3.00	5.00	303.00	4.0400	.07459	.64599

Statement	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std.	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Total 50	75	17.00	33.00	50.00	3171.00	42.2800	.47403	4.10524
Total 5	75	1.70	3.30	5.00	317.10	4.2280	.04740	.41052
Valid N	75							

The statistics of the table demonstrates that the mean of students' attitudes towards their English learning after participating the English Camp is at 4.2 (with Std. Error at .04), at the high level. Orderly arranged the mean of every single part, the statement one (The English Camp makes me appreciate the importance of English learning) reaches the highest mean at 4.6; followed by the statements 3,6, and 7 (The English Camp helps me increase my English learning skills, I believe that the English Camp can make students learn English better, and The English Camp makes my (English) learning easier) at 4.3, the statement 9 (The English Camp makes me actively learn English more) at 4.1, and the statements 4,5,8, and 10 (I am interested in English more because of the English Camp, The English Camp makes me feel undiscouraged to learn English, I believe that the English Camp makes me have a better result in my English courses, and The English Camp makes me seriously need to learn English) at 4.0 respectively.

Table 2 Genders of Participants

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Genders	female	43 (57.3%)	4.2581	.47821	.07293
	male	32 (42.7%)	4.1875	.29919	.05289

The total number of participants from the study are 75 students, consisting of 43 (57.3 percent) female students and 32 (42.7 percent) male students. The mean of the female students' attitudes is at 4.2, and the mean of male students is at 4.1.

Table 3 Age Range of Participants

		Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Valid	11-13	12	16.0	4.2583	.54181	.15641
	14-16	63	84.0	4.2222	.38581	.04861
	Total	75	100.0			

The age range of participants is divided into two groups. The ages of the first group are from 11 to 13 with 16 percent, while the ages of the second group are from 14 to 16 with 84 percent. The mean of the younger and older students is at the same level at 4.2 (4.25 and 4.22).

Part II

Table 4 Answering Open Opinion Section of Participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Answer	8	9.8	10.7	10.7
	Not answer	67	81.7	89.3	100.0
	Total	75	91.5	100.0	
Missing	System	7	8.5		
	Total	82	100.0		

Only eight (9.8%) participants respond to the open opinion section, but most of them reflect their positive opinions; for example, the English Camp enables them to learn English faster, develop their English, and see the importance of the English language.

Conclusion and Discussion

These days the English language becomes a very important tool for all people to increase the quality of life because English is pervasively used as a global language for every single dimension of the world's activities. Thailand is also directly influenced by such phenomenon, especially in education management. Thus, the English language is mandatory for schools nationwide while some extra curriculum activities such as running an English camp and the well-known "Moderate Class More Knowledge" class are also implemented -- with the main aim of enhancing the proficiency of English for the Thai students and even to draw their attention to the importance of English learning and having more confidence in using English.

The outcomes of this survey study, therefore, reveals that the average of students' attitudes towards their English learning after participating the English Camp, with the total number of 75 students and with the ages between 11-16 years old, is at the high level at 4.2. Separately, it is found out that the mean of female (at 42) students is just slightly higher than male students' one (at 4.1), not statically significant. However, in terms of reflections of contents, students view the English Camp as a positive tool to develop their English; while the most motivated learning activity provided during the camp is using songs, which teenagers love to listen to, to learn new vocabularies and the meaning of those songs. This is because the activity can fulfill what students expect to learn more from those songs with more accurate information. Hence, "songs have a positive influence on vocabulary retention of young learners" (Dzanic & Pejic, 2016, p. 40).

Since the study portrays the students' attitudes towards their English learning in relation to joining the English Camp, it should be pointed out that the English language camp could be substantially important to shape language learners to have positive attitudes towards either the language they are learning at schools or the ones they are going to learn. The findings of this study are in accordance with Al-Tamimi's study (2009) which suggested that motivated learners had more passion to learn English for "for both utilitarian and academic reasons" (Al-Tamimi, 2009, p. 47). Also, Soleimani & Hanafi (2013, pp. 3816-3823) insisted that activities which boost up positive attitudes towards the English language learning is significant for teachers and learners. Because of the activities of the English camp is mainly focused on communicative English skills like an English class conducted through communicative activities, it, therefore, enables students' self-confidence to use English (Phansrisuwan & Adipattaranan, 2018, pp. 47-57). The results of this study are also similar to a study carried out by Kittivirote, et al. (2017, pp. 15-26) on "The Study of Effectiveness of English Camp Academic Service of Primary School Students in Mauang District, Narathiwat Province".

Suggestions

1. In this survey study, the junior high school students' attitudes towards English learning are investigated and drawn on the mean at 4.2. Therefore, the results could be beneficial for the school to manage or run learning activities to promote other groups of students in order to enhance their potential to learn English more successful.
2. The school should follow up the students' English performances or learning achievement after they have taken part this camp as to see the relationship between positive attitudes and outcomes of learning.

3. In order to gain more accurate information about school students' attitudes towards English learning, a further study on either other younger participants on primary schools or even senior high school students must be conducted.

4. To further a study on other regional areas such as in the North and Northeast with boarder of samples should be addressed. At the same time, other issues such as knowledge and real language skills of students should be examined as well.

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