

# Change in Student Anxiety in Communicating Through a Short-Stay All-English Camp

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore whether students' anxiety in communicating in English would decrease through participating in a five day English camp. The results indicate that participating in an English camp, even just for five days, has an influence on decreasing students' anxiety levels in communicating in English.

This study also discusses the possibility that participating in an English camp raises students' motivation to learn English as well as leads to greater achievement in English proficiency.

## Keywords

English camp, anxiety, affective factors

## Introduction

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) adopted the policy of fostering the young people's abilities in 2012 (Go Global Japan Project) in order to have them play an active role in global society in the future. One of its main focuses is to foster young people's "communicative English competence". Though there could be some arguments that the most desirable setting to acquire English communication skills is to study abroad, some students have problems such as costs and anxiety at living in a foreign country by themselves. On the other hand, participating in English camps in Japan doesn't put too much burden on students and their parents mentally and financially. Therefore, this study investigates if English camps could give students certain kinds of "simulated experiences" of studying abroad, and if there are any positive changes in their motivations and anxiety toward communicating in English through the camp.

## 1. Methods

### 1.1 Participants

The students were participants in a five day English camp program during the summer of 2015. The participants were 18 students majoring in English language and cultures at a private university in central Japan. During the camp, they were obliged to communicate only in English with each other as well as with instructors, so that they could have a simulated study abroad experience without getting too far out of their cultural and geographic comfort zone. Since the main goal of this camp is to enhance students' communication skills in English, the activities in this program are mainly student-oriented and requiring them to collaborate with other students in English. The schedule is shown in Table 1.

### 1.2 Procedures and Measures

The participants were asked to complete a background questionnaire, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale and a measure of Perceived Competence before and after going to camp. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and Perceived Competence Scale (PCS) were utilized to measure the affective components of language learning. The FLCAS, developed by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986), is a self-report measure of language learners' feelings of anxiety in the foreign language classroom, consisting of 33 statements. The PCS, consisting of 12 items, was developed by MacIntyre and Charos (1996). It constitutes a measure of self-judgment of communication competence. In this study, the PCS is modified as Perceived English Competence, referred to Yashima (2002). A nonparametric test was employed for statistical analysis.

Table 1: The program of the camp

Time	Activities
Day 1	
16:00 - 17:30	Orientation
17:50 - 19:30	Dinner & Free Time
19:30 - 21:00	Learning games in English
Day 2	
9:30 - 12:30	Performing Children's stories
12:40 - 13:30	Lunch
13:40 - 17:00	"Opera" (performing songs in English)
17:00 - 20:00	Dinner & Free Time
20:00 - 21:30	Movie night (watching a film in English)
Day 3	
9:30 - 12:30	Acting a short play
12:40 - 13:30	Lunch
13:40 - 15:30	How stories work (preparation for filming) / Students plan their films
15:40 - 17:00	Cooking – teachers explain how to cook dishes from their home cultures
17:00 - 19:00	Barbecue in English
Day 4	
9:30 - 12:30	Filming (students film their story)
12:40 - 13:30	Lunch
13:40 - 15:00	Filming (students film their story)
15:00 - 17:30	Free time
18:00 - 19:00	Dinner
19:30 - 20:30	Viewing student films
Day 5	
9:30 - 11:30	Feedback discussion

## 2. Result and Discussion

The result indicates that the anxiety toward communicating in English of the students significantly decreased after participating in the camp ( $p < .005$ ). Furthermore, anxiety regarding "not performing well" in English and anxiety of English class are also decreased ( $p < .05$ ). As for their perceived English communication competence, the result shows that they are more likely to perceive a higher communication competence after the camp. These findings reveal that participating in the English camp, even for a short period, has a positive effect on students' affective factors such as anxiety and their confidence in communicating in English. As other research has found out that students' positive attitudes and higher motivation toward learning English correlate to English proficiency (e.g., MacIntyre, Noels, & Clément, 1997; Young, 1986), these findings invite further empirical investigation.

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