

# Boost English Language Learning through a Camp Experience

**A**s the demand for opportunities to learn English grows throughout the world, parents and educators are looking for innovative ways to engage students in English-learning opportunities. Perhaps your school or municipality will seek to initiate an English Camp to be on trend with this growing need. Or perhaps, like many go-getter teachers, you wish to initiate such a program on your own. This article explains the basics of designing and organizing a themed English Camp. The process is illustrated by examples from camp programs that were designed as Open Educational Resources (OERs) by English teachers in Belarus, beginning in 2021. The programs are the product of a course organized and facilitated by the authors of this article.

## BENEFITS OF ENGLISH CAMPS

English as a foreign language (EFL) immersion camps organized during school holidays benefit all stakeholders: language learners, their parents, schools, and language teachers. At such camps, language learners get a chance to experience massive exposure to English through fun, engaging activities and meaningful communication outside the formalities of a classroom. The learners' parents do not have to worry about their children's safety and the quality of their children's free time during a school break. For schools, English Camps are extracurricular programs that keep their learners busy with developmental experiences. For language teachers, such camps are unique experiences that enhance their professional development and often lead to incorporating camp strategies, approaches, and techniques into lessons.

## WHAT AN ENGLISH CAMP IS NOT

As experts project school-aged language minorities (e.g., English language learners [ELLs]) living in the United States to reach 40 percent by 2030 (McNeir and Wambalaba 2006), some people outside the United States have mistakenly labeled after-school and summer day programs as "American English Camps." The needs of American ELLs are much different than those of EFL students in other countries. While it is true that American after-school programs incorporate opportunities for students to increase English acquisition in a less formal academic setting (London, Gurantz, and Norman 2011; Maxwell-Jolly 2011; Holstead and Doll 2015), many programs offer a more holistic design that addresses the social and emotional needs of not only the students themselves, but also their families. In many cases, these programs

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enlist counselors who can address trauma caused by fleeing war-torn home countries and help both students and family members integrate into their new communities (Bhattacharya and Quiroga 2011; Tran and Hodgson 2015). American English Camps are only one model for English immersion camps, and it is different from what we describe and promote here.

### **WHAT AN ENGLISH CAMP IS**

EFL English Camps are usually held during a break in the school calendar. The focus of such camps is to provide the language learners (campers) the opportunity to experience the English language at the intersection of production and social interaction in a fun environment that is free of corrections, testing, and judgment, and that lowers the affective filter of the campers. EFL English Camps go outside structured classroom walls and beyond the limitations of a textbook and its associated pressure and stress, thereby following Stephen Krashen’s input hypothesis of “ $i + 1 =$  comprehensible input” and his affective-filter hypothesis of reducing stress-producing learning paradigms (Lightbown and Spada 1999). At EFL English Camps, grammatical corrections are kept to a minimum while facilitators encourage the campers to try using new vocabulary, sentence structures, and verbal expressions on their own, without fear of opinion from the facilitators or from other campers. In short, the goal is for the campers to learn to become uninhibited while working through their own English communication and expressions. The hope is that the campers take their newly found confidence

in their use of English back to their classroom and continue to thrive as well as demonstrate enhanced self-esteem, self-confidence, and inner motivation. EFL English Camps create a safe environment that allows participants to take a break from academic activities but still have quality time for social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.

### **CHOOSE A THEME**

The first step in creating an EFL English Camp is selecting a theme or focus of the camp. Camp programs can be designed around different aspects—for example, a skill (Drama Camp, Coding Camp, Chess Camp, etc.); a project (Special Days on the Calendar, etc.); or a theme (The Environment, Video Games, Superheroes, etc.). This article focuses on theme-based camps. However, regardless of the aspect or theme chosen, the following five considerations will be useful when planning your EFL English Camp.

#### **Consideration 1: Any Choice Can Be a Success**

“Language is everywhere.” One foreign-language instructor repeated that mantra every day in her 16-week Methods course. It doesn’t matter if the chosen theme is “Space,” “Pirates,” or “Time Travelers,” you will be able to find suitable materials available to construct a week of English immersion for your campers. Remember that any aspect or theme for camp can and should be adapted to physical activity, games, higher-order thinking skills, crafts, and possibly food. Everyone likes snacks, right? The idea is to make your camp as *non-academic* in nature as possible.

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When choosing a theme or an aspect, you should:

- choose what is age-appropriate;
- choose what you and your colleagues enjoy and know something about; and
- make the role of the facilitator as much fun for yourself as you hope the role of camper will be for the participants.

It is okay to choose a theme covered by a curriculum. On top of going deeper into the topic, the campers will have a chance to use the language they have already gained in school lessons. To make the familiar content more attractive, camp facilitators can find a corollary to the theme that might bring a new dimension the campers will likely not see in the classroom.

**Consideration 2: Use What Is Available**

Determine how much help you will have in implementing your camp project. If you have outside funding, either through your host school, volunteers, or a third party, you may have themed T-shirts for the campers, a related field trip, or other bonuses to enhance the camp adventure. However, if you are like most facilitators, once you pull together your team of like-minded and dedicated volunteers, you will allow the creative juices to flow and look at cardboard boxes, plastic water bottles, and packing peanuts in an entirely new and innovative light. The point is that you do not need a lot of

financial resources to create an English Camp. All you need is a visionary mind.

**Consideration 3: Create a Themed Atmosphere**

Take the campers magically into another realm where English is experienced in a clever new way. Allow them to realize English through their senses and curiosity and through adventure, surprise, and novelty. Think about what never happens (or almost never happens) in a classroom and incorporate it into the camp experience. Walking into a magical portal or crawling through a maze of strings to enter the camp location is a great way to help the campers make a mental shift from learning English to sensing English. While you and your facilitator team want to create as much of that themed atmosphere from the very first day, you can engage the campers in expanding the theme through their own crafts, which they use to help decorate the themed environment. You and your facilitator team will want to plan how the themed environment can be shifted from day to day and enhanced to make it continually engaging for the campers, allowing their craft projects to add to the excitement of the theme as it builds to the last days.

**Consideration 4: Take the Campers Outside the Classroom as Much as Possible**

Finding the right facilities in which to hold the camp is an important decision. The campers don't want to walk into a classroom during a school break. If you have access to parts of a school facility other than classrooms, get

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permission to use those areas. If weather and space allow for outside facilities and activities, incorporate that space as much as possible into your themed experience. Of course, there are times when all you have is a classroom, so do your best to hide anything that looks like a desk (especially the teacher’s desk). Use tablecloths to cover desks and turn them into mazes. Have participants bring in cushions and sit on the floor, but don’t have them sit at their desks with you standing in the front of the room! Engage them with suggested themed clothing they can wear on different days of the camp or have materials available for them to make themed hats or masks as some of their craft activities.

**Consideration 5: Accept and Enjoy Your New Educator Role**

English Camps are often organized by schoolteachers who—through years of experience—have worked out certain views of their educator role; however, English Camps are a totally different language-learning environment from the classroom. Schoolteachers should be aware of those differences and be open to the opportunities that English Camps offer.

An English Camp can be a perfect pedagogical lab for EFL teachers where they can:

- work with a partner or in a team;
- try new formats of activities and new approaches and techniques that—after being tried out at the camp—can be successfully incorporated into English lessons;
- take learners outside camp facilities by going on field trips;
- bring English into camp by inviting English-speaking guests or activity leaders;
- make their own choices outside of curriculum parameters by designing, adapting, or adopting themed materials and activities;
- create multidimensional worlds for camp themes by planning activities and experiences that address multiple aspects of a child (physical, emotional, social, cognitive, linguistic, creative, etc.);

THEME	A House in the Wood	Eco Kids	Video Games	Academy of Superheroes	Time Travelers
Age of Campers	8–10 years	10–12 years	10–13 years	11–13 years	11–14 years
Topics for Days 1–5	1. Belarus 2. The UK 3. The USA 4. Australia 5. Drama Performance	1. Ecology 2. Animals 3. Recycling 4. Transportation 5. Humans	1. Game On! 2. Smart Me 3. Healthy Me 4. Creative Me 5. Game Over!	1. Personal Identity 2. Eco Awareness 3. Art 4. Professional Orientation (Jobs) 5. Media Literacy	1. Jurassic Period 2. Ancient Egypt 3. Middle Ages 4. Future 5. Modern World
QR Code					

Note for the theme "A House in the Wood": While each of the days of the program has been set up with country-specific activities, any English-speaking country may be "visited," and all activities are interchangeable.

**Table 1. Schedules for five OER camp programs with details and QR codes**

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**[The Legend] can be a mystery, a problem to solve, a clue to find, a villain to vanquish, or something else, determined as a mission for the campers. It will help unite the days and build to the final day of victory and success for the campers.**

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- see language learners in a new light and let them shine and reveal their nonacademic skills and talents; and
- use their own talents.

### **SCHEDULE A THEME-BASED PROGRAM**

Once you choose a theme for your program, brainstorm topics to explore within that theme. This will help you plan daily schedules for your program.

Table 1 provides a list of five OER-themed camp programs with details: age of campers, topics for daily exploration, and QR codes that lead to packages of materials (daily schedules, printables, and other materials) that you are welcome to explore and use.

### **CREATE A LEGEND**

The Legend is a functional gamification element that is introduced on the first day of camp and woven throughout the theme. It can be a mystery, a problem to solve, a clue to find, a villain to vanquish, or something else, determined as a mission for the campers. It will help unite the days and build to the final day of victory and success for the campers. You may decide to open the Legend with an original story and continue the story each day until the conclusive denouement on the last day. You may “discover” a missing piece of an important part of the theme and challenge the campers to help you find the clues to its location throughout the week. A total stranger may race through the camp distressed at the oncoming asteroid about to scrape the nearby soccer field, and only the campers can save the day. Whatever you decide to use as the Legend, be sure you incorporate it into at

least one activity every day. (Scan the QR code in Table 1 for an example Legend for the “Academy of Superheroes” program.)

To introduce the Legend, read a letter such as this one:

Help! Our planet Superastra is in danger! We need Superheroes. Are you a Superhero? If not, please join the Academy and get trained. You only have five days to save our planet!

### **PLAN A BLOCK SCHEDULE**

Once the theme has been developed, the next component of camp design is setting the schedule of activities. One of the principal goals of an English Camp framework for language learning is the desire to lower the campers’ affective filter while negotiating the complexities of language acquisition. Setting up a consistent and reliable schedule for the campers is a simple way to help them acquire a feeling of safety and predictability. A simple block schedule that is repeated daily helps the campers anticipate what each day will hold. In a moment, we will address the first and last days as separate topics due to the unique activities required by those two days. For now, we will concentrate on the middle days and the related types of activities.

#### **Functional Elements**

In Table 2, activities are listed as functional elements—that is, the types of activities that may be scheduled into blocks of time each day. The number of blocks of activities per day depends on the length of the daily program and the duration per activity. To illustrate, a program might have a daily block of time designated for a dance or music of some

Functional Element (Fixed)	Methods of Using the Element (Flexible)
Song/Dance/Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• warm-up to get the day started</li> <li>• creating a song as part of the theme</li> <li>• add dance steps to a song or music with instruments the campers make</li> <li>• learning songs as a language focus (e.g., finding the words that rhyme, picking out theme-related words)</li> </ul>
Physical Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• warm-up to get the day started</li> <li>• part of the Legend (e.g., a relay race to build points needed to get the Legend clue)</li> <li>• experiential learning (see the “Incorporate Experiential Learning” section of this article)</li> <li>• energy release or time filler</li> </ul>
Crafts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• part of the creative environment (e.g., crafts stay at the facility and are incorporated into the theme décor throughout the week)</li> <li>• homework activity (e.g., bring a theme-related item of clothing for “Hat Day” or “Special Color Day”)</li> <li>• daily takeaway</li> </ul>
Language Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• warm-up to get the day started</li> <li>• learning vocabulary related to the theme through playing board games, completing a scavenger hunt, and singing themed songs</li> <li>• creating the first-day rules on safety and respect</li> <li>• learning how to ask and answer theme-related questions in English</li> <li>• understanding and relaying directions in English</li> <li>• extending language development (e.g., changing statements into questions, changing tenses)</li> <li>• using circumlocution as a method of finding and expressing meaning</li> </ul>
Legend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• daily objective presented in the form of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a story</li> <li>• a scavenger hunt</li> <li>• an acrostic (e.g., finding a letter a day to spell a word by the end of the week)</li> <li>• clues to an escape room</li> </ul> </li> <li>• development of the theme from day-to-day</li> <li>• culmination to the final ceremony and finishing the theme (e.g., completing an acrostic, gathering all the pieces of a puzzle to make the final picture)</li> </ul>
Mood Tracker (Reflection Tool)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• daily journal in audio or written form</li> <li>• feelings thermometer (a tool for helping children name their feelings and rate their intensity)</li> <li>• mood chart (a tool similar to the feelings thermometer, but in the form of a chart)</li> </ul>

**Table 2. Functional elements and methods of application**

sort, such as singing a particular camp theme song, learning a new dance, or creating music using instruments specifically associated with or created for the theme. While the block

of time may be designated “Song/Dance/Music,” the method of using this element may be to learn the vocabulary of a song or practice dance moves associated with a



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cultural theme. You can be flexible in the ways you use the functional element each day. This is important in the development of the camp schedule; while you want to create stability in the schedule, you don't want to resort to a redundant agenda that the campers lose interest in by the fourth day.

The functional elements have the flexibility of (1) leading or supporting the direction of the daily theme activities or (2) providing physical and/or mental distraction when the campers appear to be overwhelmed by or inattentive to the scheduled tasks at hand. In the latter case, rather than allowing the campers to fall into poor social patterns or L1 distractive behavior, the facilitator may choose to insert an already successful song or physical activity that re-engages the campers and brings them back to the main focus of the daily activities. The idea is to have several secondary functional elements available that can be used to help guide the campers' attention back to the theme and structure of the camp. If an activity needs to be dropped due to time constraints, that is perfectly acceptable. Again, the goal of the camp is not to follow a rigid schedule but to give the campers an immersive English experience that doesn't stress them—or the facilitators—by trying to meet self-imposed deadlines.

### MAKE ADDITIONS TO YOUR THEME

Now that you understand the structural framework of an EFL English Camp, we will describe specific things that can be added in order to enhance the theme and separate out functional elements into diverse components.

#### Warm-ups

Begin each day with a warm-up. If all the campers have not made it to the camp

location yet, it's okay if they miss an opening song or a game, whether it is physical or language-oriented. This is an opportunity to engage the campers and fill in time while you wait for late arrivals, without causing unnecessary stress for them or for you as facilitator.

#### Board Games and Card Games

Integrate board games and card games into your theme to add variety to the daily block schedule and to give the campers opportunities to use the same vocabulary and grammatical structures in multiple versions, thereby enhancing their learning proficiency through spaced repetition. One source of such games and templates is *Activate: Games for Learning American English*, which is available for free download at the American English website: <https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/activate-games-learning-american-english>



#### Game Shows

Game shows are television programs in which people compete to win prizes. Game shows can be an exciting addition to any camp program, as the formats of most game shows can be contextualized to your camp theme. For an English Camp, game shows are beneficial for many reasons. First, they typically use accessible and engaging language that develops learners' vocabulary and various language skills. Also, such activities often require quick

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thinking and strategic planning, which can improve learners' critical-thinking and problem-solving abilities as well as other life skills. Examples of television game shows applicable to English Camp are *Jeopardy!*, *Wheel of Fortune*, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, *Family Feud*, *Minute to Win It*, and *Name That Tune*, among others.

If you Google any of those, you might be discouraged by how much equipment the shows use. However, at a second glance, you will see ways of adapting the game show you choose and making it happen with very few resources. For example, instead of a huge spinner wheel for *Wheel of Fortune*, you can use a small spinner made from cardboard, a few dice, or an online spinner (e.g., Spin the Wheel app). Depending on the technology you have available, you may be able to use manual buzzers or have the necessary clues written on paper. If you have internet access, you can design your own *Jeopardy!* online game board by using the JeopardyLabs website (<https://jeopardylabs.com/>). While this website urges you to “join,” you can build a simple game for free.



As a helpful suggestion, when using any web-based game shows, prepare your questions in advance and keep all your passwords for future access.

### **ALSO, CONSIDER THIS**

#### **Duration of Camp**

EFL English Camps are structured to last a minimum of four hours per day, but usually no longer than six hours. The actual length each camp day lasts depends on multiple factors:

- the length of time facilitators have access to a camp location;
- the age of the campers (older campers can manage a longer day); and
- the facilitators-to-campers ratio that the camp has been structured to meet (the more facilitators are involved, the more activities can be offered to campers).

#### **The Ratio of Camp Facilitators to Campers**

Historically, one facilitator to ten campers is a good ratio, but that ratio is recommended for shorter time frames, or if there is only one camp facilitator for the camp. If longer camp days are preferred, the facilitator-to-campers ratio should be closer to one to five.

It is also possible to structure the daily activities for larger groups so that a facilitator chaperones ten campers around to different functional-elements activity “bases,” where other facilitators are specialized to lead physical activities, songs and dances, or theme-based story-time activities on a rotating basis. This rotating schedule works well for English Camps with more than 20 campers and has been effectively utilized in camp structures with over 150 camper participants. The downside to this type of rotation schedule is that one facilitator is needed per ten campers and then at least one, and preferably two or three facilitators,



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are needed for each functional-element activity. The facilitator who is assigned to chaperone the ten campers is usually designated as the facilitator who provides the most English immersion and language focus for the campers. In essence, the facilitators become specialists in their functional elements when using a rotating schedule, whereas facilitators using the block schedule are leaders in all the functional-element activities for the campers.

#### **Snacks and Water**

Another consideration in designing the block schedule is whether snacks will be provided. This consideration depends not only on how long the camp will last but also on the cultural rules regarding hospitality and durations between meals. In some cultures, it is always appropriate to include food as part of any social event. As hosts of the English Camp, you may be required to provide refreshments of some sort to meet cultural protocol. Make sure both your schedule and your budget provide for those cultural expectations. Of course, this is another way to tie that block of time into your themed camp by either having the campers create their snack, renaming common treats with theme-based titles, or bringing in treats related to your theme.

Remember to arrange for your campers' hydration, medical, and sanitation needs.

#### **Parental Consent**

If your camp is affiliated with a school, consult with the administration regarding requirements for parental consent and medical authorizations.

#### **PLAN THE BEGINNING**

The recommendations above aim at helping you plan the main stage of an EFL English Camp in a standardized way. However, the first and last days of camp will require specialized consideration to help the campers successfully matriculate through their camp experience.

The first day will set the tone of the entire camp, so make it fun and pull down the affective filters as fast as possible. The focus on the first day needs to be on helping the campers get to know you as the facilitator, one another as peers, and the English Camp process. This first day will include games focused on getting-to-know-you icebreakers and bonding activities that build trust among the campers. It will also focus on going over the camp rules related to respect and safety. Although going over the rules may seem trivial and boring, rules are a vital part of helping the campers understand they are in a safe place and with adults who will be their advocates in learning English, not adults who are there to judge their English proficiency.

A good way to help campers learn they are safe in expressing their emotional comfort is to wrap up each day at camp with a group or individual reflection activity that engages a mood tracker that can be emoji-based, color-based (e.g., green = happy; yellow = not sure; red = unhappy), or some other form of emotional self-expression. The campers can reflect on their mood during the day at camp, their favorite activity, or their favorite word of the day. A daily reflection routine is another tool for the campers' vocabulary enhancement, as they use adjectives to describe their emotions and experiences.

However, if campers are at different language-ability levels, reflection can be approached differently: lower-level participants can use the L1, emojis, and a lot of verbal and nonverbal support to produce controlled or semi-controlled language; higher-level participants, meanwhile, can use reduced scaffolding to produce less scripted outcomes.

The first day might include more L1 guidance than the rest of the week. You will need to gauge the comfort level of your campers and adjust accordingly. Once again, the goal is to help the campers feel safe in their English proficiency and learning experience.

### PLAN THE END

An excellent way to promote future EFL English Camps is to have a closing ceremony for the campers on the last day. This is an opportunity to let colleagues, the community, and future stakeholders know about the impact that the English Camp can have on the youth in their community. Consider inviting everyone who has, or who could have, a vested interest in the success of EFL English Camps. This doesn't mean that the ceremony needs to be an Academy Award-winning performance by you or by your campers. It is simply an opportunity to get the highlights of the last week in front of people who may be willing to carry the English language vehicle forward for future applications. Stakeholders do not necessarily have to be those with financial resources. These could be parents in the community who want to volunteer as future facilitators or teachers who are willing to learn more about the program. However, there is also the possibility of encouraging community

agents to finance field trips for future English Camps, possibly to businesses and historical or cultural locations. In any event, the more you can publicize an English Camp experience through invitations to the closing ceremony, the more likely you will see the camp model carried forward in future years.

The closing ceremony is an opportunity for the campers to run their victory lap when it comes to their gain in English proficiency. The focus is on them and what they have accomplished individually and collectively during the camp. To make the ceremony a success, the facilitators need to invest themselves in the learning process of each of the campers. What were their individual wins? Where did they struggle and then ultimately overcome? The closing ceremony is never about camp, its theme, or the facilitators; it is about how the campers have overcome their fear of English and challenged it for success. The closing ceremony can also be a time for certificates to be awarded to campers; the certificates acknowledge each camper's personal growth through the identification of character traits (steadfast, persistent, kind, dependable, courageous, etc.). Each certificate is signed and dated as a testimony that that camper has accomplished something that the facilitator took note of and honored. For some of the campers, that certificate of accomplishment will propel them on to confidence in their continued language learning and in their personal development because an authority figure saw them as an individual and acknowledged them as a valuable treasure.

In addition to honoring the campers, the closing ceremony should be a time of

Day 1 / First Day	Main Substance			Day 5 / Final Day
	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	
See the "Plan the Beginning" section of this article	Opening-the-day routines			See the "Plan the End" section of this article
	Activities: Types and duration depend on the length of the day at camp			
	Closing-the-day routines			

**Table 3. General template for a five-day camp**

reflection on the fun activities and learning that took place throughout the camp. If there was a camp song, then sing it; if there was a camp dance, then perform it and teach it to the audience. Celebrate the entire camp experience as profoundly as you can because the final ceremony may be what you and the campers will remember most. It isn't the end of a week; it's the creation of a lifelong memory for all of those who participated. Make the memory last.

### **EXAMPLE OF A GENERAL TEMPLATE FOR A FIVE-DAY PROGRAM SCHEDULE**

Now that you know the main blocks that usually make up a camp program, you can draft a schedule. The template in Table 3 shows a schedule for a five-day camp. If you have more days, add them to the main substance part of the program, but keep the first and last days of the camp special.

### **CAUGHT NOT TAUGHT**

An EFL English Camp is an informal language-immersion environment where the target language is not explicitly taught and language proficiency is not measured. Instead of studying English, language learners at camp are exposed to massive comprehensible input, and through participating in tailored activities, they pick up the language whenever they are ready. At camp, there are no expectations for how many linguistic items a camper is supposed to learn. The focus is on meaningful interactions and activities, not on the correctness of language forms.

### **STAY IN ENGLISH**

At first, facilitators at an EFL English Camp might feel uncomfortable using the target language nonstop. They often do not have such a habit. The same relates to language learners who sign up for camp. This feeling is acceptable and will go away soon. Just keep returning to English each time you or your campers derail. Below are seven tips designed to help:

**Tip 1.** Lead by example; that includes how you use your English. If English is your L2, make sure you are thoroughly comfortable using the vocabulary of the theme you have chosen.

**Tip 2.** Rehearse giving instructions in English so you won't fall back into giving instructions in the L1 once the camp begins.

**Tip 3.** If the campers struggle to give clear answers, learn the technique of using circumlocution to help them negotiate meaning; they can work around words they are unfamiliar with by using familiar words, synonyms, facial and hand gestures, and pantomimes.

**Tip 4.** If the campers do not understand what you are telling them in English, try to adjust, simplify, and accommodate your English rather than switching to their L1. Support your English instructions with modeling and demonstration.

**Tip 5.** As a facilitator, ask questions rather than give answers. Have the campers explain their meaning to you even if they do it in their L1. When that happens, you can say, "Do you mean ...?" and translate their words into English. Human nature may lead them to restate their meaning in English once they have been given the correct words. Help them repeat the correct words and grammar each time a learning opportunity arises.

**Tip 6.** Give the campers time to think when you are giving instructions in English. This may include allowing them to process English instructions in their L1 with their peers before they give an answer in English. The important thing is they are working out the answer themselves and not looking to you to give them the answer.

**Tip 7.** Make the communicative task a game by using clapping, pointing to the next person, or dropping a word with a questioning gesture so that campers may guess what the next word is. One purpose of having a theme is to recycle the vocabulary throughout the camp.

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## By implementing experiential learning into the framework of an English Camp, you can challenge the campers to push the use of the L2 within their proficiency level.

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This is an opportunity to help the campers build confidence in using the words and grammar structures they are learning.

### DIFFERENTIATE YOUR INSTRUCTION

An EFL English Camp, by design, has few entrance requirements for the campers. The only limitation might be a certain age range. Therefore, the campers will come into the experience with a wide range of English proficiencies. As the facilitator, you will need to integrate all the proficiency levels into an enjoyable and engaging experience for everyone. No one can be left out.

Table 4 offers a visual representation of how any type of activity can be differentiated for multiple proficiency levels by providing different groups of language learners with different language input (the content); by setting different tasks (the process); or by expecting different language output (the product).

Do not fall into the trap of pairing higher-proficiency campers with lower-proficiency campers. Otherwise, by the end of the week, the lower-level campers may have had fun,

but they would not have been challenged to learn English. Their partner will have done all their translating for them. The goal of differentiated learning is that learning takes place at all levels for all campers at an individual level. The campers participate in group activities, but they contribute individually to the goals of completing the group activities at the proficiency level they are most comfortable with.

### INCORPORATE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

By definition, experiential learning is a “learning by doing” process that engages the learner in a well-planned, supervised, and reflective activity that promotes higher-order thinking skills. It is a derivation of D. L. Kolb’s Learning Cycle, which identifies four steps within effective learning: concrete learning, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb 1984). Within the context of EFL English Camps, experiential learning usually involves some type of physically challenging game or a group activity that is not competitive. The campers are given a limited set of instructions and told to come to a specific solution. They may have

<b>Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• amount of structure</li> <li>• instructor-led introduction of content and follow-up</li> <li>• resources (books, pamphlets, internet, realia, etc.)</li> <li>• materials (worksheets, manipulatives, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• time allowed</li> <li>• level of independence required (age/proficiency-based)</li> <li>• number of steps needed for completion</li> <li>• challenge level and complexity</li> </ul>
<b>Product</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• form of expression</li> <li>• different outcomes</li> </ul>

**Table 4. Differentiated instruction**

to work against a time limit or design a seemingly impossible construction. The purpose of the activity is for the group to engage as a team, solve problems, and work through to the solution. In most cases, there is no single right answer to the dilemma.

Experiential learning allows people to learn from natural consequences, mistakes, and successes, all of which are needed for lifelong learning. At the debriefing stage, experiential learning involves:

- a reflection of the process: “What worked, what did not work, and why?”
- critical analysis and synthesis: “What tools were available to complete the task? What didn’t the directions tell us?”

By implementing experiential learning into the framework of an English Camp, you can challenge the campers to push the use of the L2 within their proficiency level. Some campers may use the L2 only when they are giving a reflective answer regarding the outcome of the activity. Others may accidentally slip into their L1 as they get caught up in the excitement of the activity. Still others may show progression throughout the camp into stronger use of English as they become more confident as a team player and contributor to the success of the end goal.

A classic example of a higher-level experiential-learning activity is Traffic Jam: [https://brilliantpathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/traffic\\_jam\\_teamwork.pdf](https://brilliantpathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/traffic_jam_teamwork.pdf)



It is harder to find experiential-learning games designed for younger or lower-level learners. They exist, but it takes research to find them.

## CONCLUSION

This article contains everything you will need to organize a successful week-long themed EFL English Camp, including access to five completed packages of themed materials (by scanning the QR codes in Table 1). We have identified the benefits to the students, their parents, the school administration, and you as an educator. Now it is up to you to seek a location, with approval from administration, and find like-minded enthusiastic teachers to help design and facilitate the camp program. Then, all you need are eager campers who want to learn English while having fun.

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