



## Can English Camp Predict the Interest of Mountain Tribe Children in Binaiya in Learning English?

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### Abstract

The toughest challenge for education policymakers is to provide programmes that can help mountain tribe children be immersed in the English learning process so that they can overcome their learning difficulties. This research highlights this by providing an English camp for mountain tribe children at the foot of Binaiya mountain, Central Maluku, Indonesia. Through a quasi-experiment with a group of 13 people, it was found that the English camp strongly predicted the interest of mountain tribe children in Binaiya in learning English ( $p = 0.009$ ). This is because English camps can help children immerse themselves in the learning process and facilitate their self-determination and comfort. However, one limitation of this study is that it did not fully control for threat factors and only included a comparison group. Therefore, the recommendation for future researchers is to pay attention to this and make self-determination and comfort as moderator and mediator variables in predicting English camps with an interest in learning English.

**Keywords:** *English Camp, Interest, Mountain Tribe*

### INTRODUCTION

When we asked some children from a mountain tribe living under the foothills of Mount Biniaya, Central Maluku, Indonesia, if English was difficult, they replied, "English is not difficult, but I understand it". Some children replied, "English is not difficult, but I don't understand it". This phrase came from Vianus, a child of the Huaulu tribe who lived under the foothills of Mount Binaiya in Central Maluku. Vianus is a mountain-tribe child who has a strong desire to learn English, but he does not understand it. Likewise, Lince, a tribal child from Selumena who lives under the foothills of Mount Binaiya, also said, "English is not difficult, but I need to learn a lot".

The two phrases imply that the mountain tribe children already have an interest in learning English, but they find it difficult to understand. They believe that learning English is not difficult is an expression of their interest in learning English, but they do not understand it and need a lot of time to learn it. Some findings demonstrate that children who already have an interest in English but find it difficult to understand are bored due to the lack of interactive learning media to overcome boredom (Andreani & Ying, 2019) learning resources such as textbooks that are not contextualized with children's lives (Huang, 2019), and the lack of vocabulary knowledge and deep understanding of English texts (Hall et al., 2019; Jozwik & Douglas, 2017). These findings seem to suggest that the way to overcome difficulties in learning English despite their interest in it is to provide contextualized learning.

Although English is difficult, every child in various countries, including Indonesia, whether they like it or not, must learn it (Bai et al., 2020; Hu & McKay, 2012; Jacob et al., 2015; You-Jin & Mun-Koo, 2016). This is because it is generally known that English is an international language that



plays an important role in the current era of globalization (You-Jin & Mun-Koo, 2016; Ahn, 2015). Therefore, the education curriculum in Indonesia explicitly requires students from elementary to senior high schools to learn English. This policy has had a huge impact on the children of mountain tribes living under the foot of Mount Binaiya, Central Maluku, Indonesia. However, English education for mountain tribe children faces many challenges, such as budget shortages, a lack of qualified teachers, limited English materials, and low access to higher education (Jacob et al., 2015). This makes it more difficult for mountain tribe children to learn English, despite having a strong interest in learning it.

Based on the results of our interviews with people who live under the foot of Binaiya mountain, they explained that six schools can be reached by mountain tribe children: Manusela Elementary School, Kanikeh Elementary School, Huaulu Elementary School, Tehoru Junior High School, Huaulu Junior High School-SP 1, and SMA 60 Central Maluku in Trans Huaulu. All of these schools require Binaiya mountain tribe children to learn English. To get to these schools, mountain tribe children from Selumena, for example, said they had to walk for 3 days and three nights. One child shared that he wanted to go to school not because of his parents' encouragement but because of his desires. The same statement was also made by other children. The self-determined desire to go to school is closely related to self-determination theory (SDT). This theory explains that a person's actions that depart from his autonomous freedom in making decisions, for example, to go to school, tend to make him responsible for his decisions so that he encourages him to master school tasks that feel difficult to solve (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Therefore, when English is perceived as difficult, mountain tribe children feel that they must try to master it, as they said, "English is not difficult, but I need to learn a lot."

The design of the English camp in this study was given specifically to the children of mountain tribes who live under the foot of Mount Binaiya to predict their interest in learning English. The English camp in this study was designed according to the context of the life of mountain tribe children so that they could immerse themselves in the process of learning English. This design is expected to be a solution for policymakers and practitioners in the world of education to apply it to mountain-tribe children in Indonesia and other countries. This research also adds positive value to the future development of English curricula and educational psychology. Based on the entire review, this article will determine whether the English camp can predict the interest of mountain tribe children in Binaiya in learning English.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Deci and Ryan (2015) and Han (2021) implicitly explain that Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is fundamentally linked to an individual's inherent interest in mastering tasks, particularly those perceived as challenging. Interest, as highlighted by Bai et al. (2020), functions as a pivotal psychological variable, empowering individuals to persevere through difficulties encountered when learning English. Empirical evidence, as demonstrated in studies by Bai et al. (2020), Blinkoff et al. (2023), and Tin (2016), consistently indicates that individuals possessing a genuine interest in English are more likely to overcome obstacles during the learning process. SDT plays an important role in shaping interest; thus, it needs to be facilitated by a program that can reinforce it. The researchers posit that learning programs designed to cultivate and sustain interest must be intrinsically aligned with the lived experiences of mountain-tribal children. By grounding the learning process in students' daily realities, the program can better resonate with students' existing knowledge and cultural context, fostering a deeper sense of connection and motivation.

The authors believe that an English camp can facilitate SDT and nurture the interests of mountain tribe children in Binaiya, Central Maluku. English camps offer an immersive environment that can facilitate children's ability to absorb the English learning process (Asmara et al., 2016;

Chien, 2018; You-Jin & Mun-Koo, 2016). This approach is particularly beneficial as it aims to integrate the context of the children's lives into the English learning experience, thus making the learning process more meaningful and relevant. As a result, children are more likely to feel a sense of self-determination and comfort during English lessons (Garhani & Supriyono, 2021; Lee & Jeong, 2013; Lillie, 2016; Sugita McEown & Takeuchi, 2014; You-Jin & Mun-Koo, 2016), fostering a greater level of engagement and a stronger interest in learning English.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quasi-experiment (one-group pretest-posttest design) for examining the effect of the English camp on predicting interest in using English in a natural setting. This means that this research only involves one experimental group (Hastjarjo, 2019; Neuman, 2014), which is then given an English camp intervention. Due to logistical constraints and the unique circumstances of working with remote mountain tribe communities, a traditional randomized control group design was not feasible. Access to participants was limited, and creating equivalent control and experimental groups would have been exceptionally challenging. Therefore, a one-group pretest-posttest design was employed as the most practical and ethical approach. The one-group pretest-posttest design is susceptible to threats to internal validity, such as maturation, history, and testing effects. To mitigate these threats, we implemented the English camp over a relatively short period (3 days) to minimize maturation effects. The pretest and posttest were administered using a standardized instrument, and clear instructions were provided to reduce potential testing effects. Furthermore, we actively sought to control extraneous variables during the camp.

The English camp was a three-day immersive program that focused on developing basic conversational English skills. Activities included interactive games, storytelling sessions based on local folklore, songs, and outdoor language practice activities in the children's natural environment. The camp used a communicative language teaching approach, emphasizing practical application and active participation. The design of this English camp learning strategy, for example, can be seen in the process, such as children learning English on a hill not far from the village, learning under a tree in the middle of the forest, and then also learning in front of the terrace of the mountain tribe's house. The design of this learning strategy enables children to immerse themselves in the learning process, which will affect their interest in learning English. The English camp learning strategy designed has undergone a content validity test process using the Gregory approach. Based on the assessment of two English language experts and two curriculum experts on the English camp learning strategy design, the content validity level was set at 0.9. This shows that children of mountain tribes can be given English camps.

This study involved a sample of 13 high school students from mountain tribes living under the foot of Mount Biniaya, Central Maluku, Indonesia. Some of them came from three different villages: Huaulu (11 people), Maraina (1 person), and Selumena (1 person). The sample was collected incidentally after the patient provided informed consent. The samples were then formed into one experimental group and subjected to a pretest-posttest. The sample size of the 13 participants was relatively small, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. However, given the challenges of accessing and working with this specific population, this sample represents a significant portion of eligible students in the target area. Future research with larger sample sizes is warranted to confirm these findings.

The interest instrument used in this study was adapted from Bai et al. (2020) study to measure the intrinsic value of students' enjoyment of English lessons. The validity and reliability of this scale are 0.92. This scale consists of four statement items, one of which reads, "I find interest in learning English". After we adapted the scale, the results of the content validity test from two experts (psychology and linguistics) found a Gregory score of 1.0, which means that the instrument

has a very good level of content validity. Third, the subjects were given the English camp learning strategy from March 17 to 19, 2023, at Huaulu. Finally, fourth, the subjects were given another interest scale to determine the difference before and after the English camp intervention. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was chosen as the appropriate nonparametric statistical test to analyze the data due to the small sample size and the nonnormal distribution of the interest scores. The data analysis technique used in this study was Wilcoxon with the help of SPSS version 18. This analysis is used to prove and explain whether English camp can predict the interest of mountain tribe children who live under the foot of Mount Binaiya in learning English.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the mean, maximum, minimum, and standard deviation of the interest in understanding English. The minimum-maximum scores on the pretest ranged from 13 to 19, and on the posttest ranged from 17 to 20. In addition, the average interest rates from pretest to posttest were 16.46 and 18.62. This indicates that there was a difference between the mean pre-test and posttest scores.

Descriptively, the subject characteristics (Table 2) consisted of males (3 people) and females (10 people). The average age of the subjects was 16.38 years old, with details of 15-16 years old (8 people) and 17-18 years old (5 people). The subjects came from three villages located around Mount Binaiya: 11 from Huaulu, 1 from Selumena, and 1 from Maraina.

Furthermore, if this interest variable is categorized into three categories, namely, low, medium, and high (Figure 1), then for the pretest, the interest score obtained from the subject is mostly in the "medium" category. In the post-test, it was also in the "medium" category. This shows that there is no difference in the category of subjects' interest in understanding English. However, there is a difference in interest in the pretest, where initially, 23% of subjects in the low category were reduced to 8% in the posttest, and the high category, which was originally 8%, became 23%. That is, there is an increase in the category of interest.

According to the Wilcoxon test, the significance value is 0.009 ( $p < 0.01$ ), which means that there is a difference in the interest scores of Binaiya's mountain tribe children in learning English during the pretest and posttest (Table 3, Figure 2). In other words, the English camp effectively predicted the interest of the Binaiya mountain tribe children in learning English.

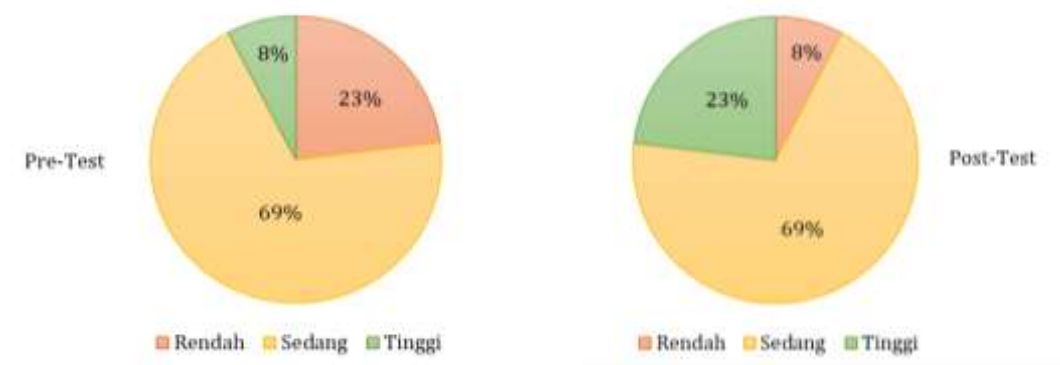
**Table 1.** Descriptive Data of Interest in Understanding English Pre- and Post-tests

Statistics	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Rata-rata	16,46	18,62
Minimum	13	17
Maximum	19	20
St. Deviation	2,06	0,96

**Table 2.** Characteristics of the research subjects

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
15-16 years old	8 person	61,5%
17-18 years old	5 person	38,5%
Sex		
Male	3 person	23,1%
Female	10 person	76,9%
Village		
Huaulu	11 person	84,6%

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Selumena	1 person	7,7%
Maraina	1 person	7,7%



**Figure 1.** Pre-Test and Post-Test Interest Categorization

**Table 3.** Wilcoxon Test Results

	Negative Rank	Positive Rank	Z	Asym. Sig
Pre-Test	3,0	7,20	-2,614	0,009
Post-Test				



**Figure 2.** Graph of Interest in Understanding English Pre-Test and Post-tests

This study proves that there is a difference in interest before and after an English camp. The results of this study are in line with previous findings (Asmara et al., 2016; Chien, 2018; Garhani & Supriyono, 2021; Richardson & Kelderhouse, 2016; Vines, 1985; You-Jin & Mun-Koo, 2016). This finding also confirms Jacob et al. (2015), who explained that learning strategies for mountain tribe children need to pay attention to the context of their lives to be interested in English lessons. As the

programme design in this study, [Lee and Jeong \(2013\)](#), [Lillie \(2016\)](#), and [You-Jin and Mun-Koo \(2016\)](#) stated that the English camp was designed based on the context of mountain tribe children's lives to help them immerse themselves in the learning process. As a result, children engaged in the learning process tend to feel more comfortable, making them more interested in learning English. A high interest in learning English is instrumental for children to overcome any difficulties they encounter during the learning process ([Bai et al., 2020](#); [Blinkoff et al., 2023](#); [Tin, 2016](#)).

The mean scores and categorization of interest showed a difference both before and after the English camp. Initially, at the time of the pretest, the subjects had a low interest category of 23%, which decreased to 8% at the time of the posttest. This shows a shift in the number of subjects whose interest is in the low category moving to the high category, such that after being given an English camp, there is an increase in the high category by 23% from the initial 8%. This shift in the number of subjects from low to high indicates that English camps are effective in increasing the interest of Binaiya mountain tribe children in learning English. This shift is due to many reasons, one of which is that English camp provides contextualized learning according to the lives of mountain tribe children ([Jacob et al., 2015](#)). [You-Jin and Mun-Koo \(2016\)](#) stated that a sense of comfort in the learning process can facilitate children's self-determination when learning English ([Garhani & Supriyono, 2021](#); [Sugita McEown & Takeuchi, 2014](#)).

In self-determination theory (SDT), activities that facilitate children's autonomous freedom to engage in English learning will encourage them to be more interested in mastering the subject matter ([Deci & Ryan, 2012](#); [Han, 2021](#)). This theory was confirmed by the participants' statements that their involvement in school was based on their autonomy. It is evident from the fact that even though the distance they traveled between home and school was very far, they spent three days and three nights traveling on foot. Thus, they seemed eager to continue attending school. It was this autonomous freedom to decide to go to school that made the subjects responsible for attending English lessons, as well as the responsible involvement in the English camp program, even though they initially found it difficult to understand the lessons.

[Deci and Ryan \(2015\)](#) explained that activities that stem from autonomous freedom strongly influence an individual's interest in learning English. This is because autonomous freedom is related to intrinsic motivation to participate in these lessons. [Deci and Ryan \(2015\)](#) further explained that what drives a person to act or want to engage in certain activities, for example, learning English, depends on motivation, which can be seen from a mechanistic or organismic perspective. The mechanistic involvement of individuals in certain activities is closely related to the theoretical assumptions proposed by [Skinner \(1971\)](#) stated that involvement in activities depends on reinforcement provided by other people or the environment after individuals do something. In the organismic perspective, the individual's involvement in certain activities is a departure from his/her autonomy; this assumption is closely related to [Piaget's theory \(1971\)](#), which emphasizes the process of assimilation. In addition, there are also theories, such as [Bandura et al \(1999\)](#), which proposes that individual involvement in certain activities is strongly influenced mechanistically as well as organismically (autonomous). In this study, the children's engagement in learning English seems to come from their autonomy, which is facilitated by the English camp program.

[Deci and Ryan \(2015\)](#) argued that activities that are interesting and bring comfort can autonomously facilitate individuals' intrinsic motivation to continue to engage in these activities. Moreover, learning activities conducted by camping further facilitate individual SDT ([Erickson & Fornauf, 2019](#)). Therefore, individuals tend to be more successful during the learning process ([Deci & Ryan, 2012](#)). This explanation reinforces this finding that the English camp program has attempted to present activities that help subjects immerse themselves so that they feel comfortable while facilitating their autonomy ([Garhani & Supriyono, 2021](#); [Lee & Jeong, 2013](#); [Lillie, 2016](#); [Sugita McEown & Takeuchi, 2014](#); [You-Jin & Mun-Koo, 2016](#)). Thus, subjects became more



interested in learning English after being given the English camp program. This finding confirms [Deci and Ryan's \(2015\)](#) opinion that a person can be interested depending on intrinsic motivation (autonomy), which is strengthened by activities that bring comfort.

The toughest challenge for policymakers in the world of education for children of mountain tribes is to provide learning strategies that can make them immersed. In other words, to facilitate SDT and comfort to influence learners' interest in learning English. In this study, the subjects stated that they felt comfortable during the English camp when we held it in Kalasiwa forest, which is not far from the Huaulu tribe village in Binaiya. During the activity process, the mountain tribe children were divided into three groups. Each group was guided by three tutors. The children learn while sitting on the grass next to the clove and durian trees. This learning process adapts to the context of mountain tribe children who usually play in the middle of the forest. The children's faces showed their joy; they smiled and laughed as they watched the tutors explain the material. This kind of learning activity made them feel that they enjoyed learning every material taught by the tutors. After the materials were given, the tutors invited the children to tell stories about themselves and their villages using English. They seemed to be able to tell the profile of their village stammering while being corrected by the tutors.

Apart from speaking, the children were also asked to write in English. When writing, the children did not write "my nickname is" but they wrote "my nak name is". The child thinks that the word "nak" is read "nik" which means the same as "nick" because "a" in English is read "ae", so the child feels it is appropriate to write "nak". The mistakes made in the writing process were then corrected by the tutors. Although their English skills still seem to be stammering in terms of speaking and writing, when we asked whether they felt comfortable with English lessons through this English camp program, They answered "yes" because the learning process was carried out in the middle of the forest where the children of the mountain tribes in Binaiya play.

In addition to SDT and the convenience facilitated by English camps predicting individuals' interest in learning English, the background of the tutor is also an important factor in determining the significance of English camps predicting individuals' interest in the subject. Research conducted by [Ahn \(2015\)](#) showed that tutors from overseas are more effective at helping students explore their English language skills in English camp programs. In addition, the English camp activities guided by the tutor also positively provide insight into cultural diversity and criticality for students, which is in line with learning English so that these students can become global citizens in the future ([Ahn, 2015](#)). In addition, these tutors can also immerse students in the learning process ([Ahn, 2015](#)). Although foreign tutors are effective in the English camp program, as explained by [Chien \(2018\)](#) The tutors must also be able to understand the locality of the students. In other words, the tutor must possess indigenous insights that are implemented in English education ([Jacob et al., 2015](#)). Such a tutor's background is certainly needed in the English camp program, especially for mountain tribe children, so that they are more interested in English lessons.

In addition, a study by [Chien \(2018\)](#) explained that teachers who implement an English camp program should be equipped with competencies. In particular, competencies related to knowledge in designing learning activities that match students' interests ([Chien, 2018](#)). Some other studies, such as [You-Jin and Mun-Koo \(2016\)](#) and [Richardson and Kelderhouse \(2016\)](#), explained that when designing an English camp program, teachers must also have a sociocultural framework and interactive and collaborative skills in their efforts to implement it. The ability of such teachers can arouse students' interest in learning English during/after English camp programs. All these reviews emphasize that tutors who implement the English camp program must have a good competency background, have indigenous, sociocultural insights, and be interactive as well as collaborative so that children are more interested in the lesson.

Although these factors of SDT, convenience, and tutor background are important to increase

English camp and predict an individual's interest in learning English, no research has proven whether these three factors can moderate and/or mediate English camp on children's interest in learning English. This question is an unanswered limitation of this study. Therefore, we recommend that future researchers prove this, especially for children from other mountain tribes in Indonesia and other countries. In addition, the limitations of this study are related to internal validity issues in quasi-experiments. As explained by [Hastjarjo \(2019\)](#), the difference between the pretest and posttest may not be influenced by the independent variable but by other factors. Therefore, the effect of an English camp on subjects' interest in learning English may be due to other threatening factors.

During this study, we observed that a factor that threatens internal validity is the background of the tutors when giving English camps to mountain tribe children. The backgrounds of the three tutors in this study were quite diverse, with one being an English lecturer and the other two being English students. The children who studied with tutors with a lecturer background were more likely to smile and laugh quietly and were able to demonstrate speaking skills and answer questions compared to the group of children taught by tutors with a student background. We suspect that this tutor background factor threatens the internal validity of this quasi-experimental study. In addition, this study did not use a comparison group, so it is unknown whether the English camp significantly predicts interest or not. Therefore, we recommend that future researchers control for these threatening factors by considering the involvement of tutor backgrounds as well as presenting a comparison group in future research.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This study demonstrates that an English camp significantly increased the interest of Binaiya mountain tribe children in learning English ( $p = 0.009$ ), as evidenced by a shift in interest categories from low to high among participants after the intervention. The success of the English camp can be attributed to its contextualized design, which utilizes the natural environment to create a comfortable learning atmosphere that fosters active engagement. These findings align with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), in which autonomous freedom in learning contributes to increased intrinsic motivation. Programs like the English camp can serve as models for schools in other remote areas, provided the design is adapted to the local context. However, limitations such as the absence of a control group suggest that future research should address these shortcomings and explore the role of moderator/mediator variables, such as comfort in learning.

## **LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

The limitations of this study include the limited number of participants available to participate in the English camp program. This constraint made it challenging to apply inferential analysis to examine the effect of the English learning camp on interest in using English. Additionally, since this quasi-experimental study involved only a single group without a control group, it was difficult to make comparisons to establish causality between the English camp and interest in using English. Furthermore, the tutors involved in implementing the English camp program had diverse backgrounds, making it difficult to determine whether the English camp itself predicted the emergence of interest in using English or whether this interest was influenced by the tutors' backgrounds. Ideally, the tutors should have undergone training on the English camp design before applying it in a quasi-experimental study. These limitations ultimately threaten the internal validity of this quasi-experimental study. Therefore, for future research of a similar nature, particularly studies conducted with mountain-tribe children as subjects, it is essential to consider these limitations. These limitations serve as recommendations for future researchers, emphasizing that to establish causal relationships between the effects of the English camp and interest in using



English, adequate sample size, the inclusion of a control group, and uniformity in the tutors' qualifications and backgrounds must be ensured.

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