

# Fostering motivation and achievement through the English and Leadership Camp at Otemae University

大手前大学におけるイングリッシュリーダーシップキャンプを  
通してのモチベーション育成と達成の助長

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**Abstract:** In academic institutions around the world, camps are increasingly being utilized as an effective strategy to enhance motivation and achievement among students. From art to language to science to business, outdoor programs offer a variety of exciting, intellectually challenging, and enriching experiences for all types of learners. This student-centered approach provides a way in which a successful English camp on leadership can be built. Upon this rationale, this paper illustrates the relevance that camps have on Otemae University's philosophy of education and supports the position that they are an effective means to fortify student leaders who will positively influence others through virtue and example.

Keywords: university leadership camps, English as a foreign language, motivation, team building

## 要旨

世界中の学術機関において、学生のモチベーション育成と達成を助長する効果的な方法としてキャンプが利用されている。芸術から語学、科学からビジネスまでアウトドアプログラムは、バラエティに富んだ楽しくて知的で挑戦的、そして豊かな経験を様々なタイプの学習者に提供している。

この学生主導型アプローチはイングリッシュキャンプにおいてリーダーシップを培う事にも役に立つ。この論理的根拠に則り、当論文は大手前大学の教育哲学に対するキャンプの関連性を示し、またキャンプが他の学生に対し美德と模範を通じて好ましい影響を与えるであろう学生リーダー達を強くする効果的な手段であるという事を支持するものである。

キーワード：大学のリーダーシップキャンプ、英語、外国語、動機、チームビルディング

## Introduction

Since its conception under the leadership of Shirley and Koichi Ando in 2008, the English and Leadership Camp is built on the premise that communicating entirely or mostly in English for a number of days in a natural setting increases motivation to study. The informal camp style helps them develop a greater willingness to use English as they focus on communication instead of perfection or making mistakes (Halvorsen, 2004). The aims of the camp are to provide the participants with an atmosphere conducive to collaborating in English freely, building cooperation among peers, and instilling motivation to lead. The ultimate objective of the camp, however, is not merely to promote a sense of eagerness in students to become leaders. Rather, the aim is for them to develop a sense of confidence and a perspective of leadership that is not regarded as an exclusive goal in itself, but a means to greater accomplishment and a springboard to provide meaningful support to their peers in the classroom.

The concept of the English Leadership Camp is in line with Otemae University's underlining philosophy of teaching that promotes self-motivating, ability-building, and problem-solving education. The competency platform, C-PLATS, on which the system is founded advocates social responsibility, teamwork, logical thinking, analysis, creativity, planning, communication, presentation, leadership and action (Ashihara 2011). With this framework in mind, the program centers on the premise that when students return to class, they will strive to be effective leaders who demonstrate integrity through positive conduct in the classroom. Consequently, their actions will influence others and enhance both the spirit and scholastic level of their classes.

## **Context**

Leaders serve people best when they develop their own initiative and judgment, enabling them to grow and become better contributors (Bateman, 2010), and one effective way to improve such qualities is to live in close proximity with others. For two to three days, the scene is set for meaningful interaction as students collaborate in leadership activities such as creating skits and presentations, participating in group discussions and engaging naturally in peer mentoring. Other endeavors include preparing meals outdoors, clean-up work, and dividing tasks in shared accommodation. With English as the primary means of communication, focus is placed on teamwork and successful cooperation with others. The relaxed, less scholastic activities are designed to reduce anxiety, build character through partnership, and develop effective coping skills among peers. Yearly themes such as discrimination, fear, peer pressure, intercultural communication and using English as a global language are also areas of focus for the students to discuss and present. Through their own contributions to the process, participants learn to recognize their talents and communication abilities so that they can set personal goals and develop a vision for achieving them. Additionally, students are able to identify some of their strengths in order to overcome certain weaknesses that may impede their progress in accomplishing their goals and aspirations.

The success of this camp program can also be acutely linked to its venue, which provides a perfect setting for



**Photo 1: Students prepare for orientation.**

2015 English & Leadership Camp  
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**Itinerary and Program Schedule**

◇ **Saturday, July 11**

- 8:00 Meet at Otemae Itami Campus (DON'T BE LATE!!)
- 8:30 Leave for Himeji port
- 11:30 Take the ferry boat to Ieshima Island (Bring your own lunch)
- 12:05 Arrive at Ieshima. Walk to the Ieshima Center (about 40 minutes)  
General orientation by Ieshima staff.
- 13:30 Check into cabins
- 14:00 Orientation, icebreakers, and warm-ups
- 16:00 Swimming in the refreshing sea
- 17:30 Prepare dinner
- 20:00 Leadership activities

◇ **Sunday, July 12**

- 08:00 Breakfast
- 09:00 Cabin cleanup
- 10:00 Debriefing of camp experience
- 11:45 Leave for the ferry boat
- 12:30 Take the ferry boat to Himeji port
- 13:05 Arrive at Himeji port. Board Otemae bus
- 16:00 Arrive at Otemae Itami Campus

**Figure 1: Camp Schedule for 2015.**

a range of collaborative activities. Since its inception, the site of the camp has been the Hyogo Prefectural Ieshima Nature Center among the idyllic islands of the Seto Inland Sea. The location offers a scenic beach with a swimming area, canoe rental equipment, cabins for accommodation, open assembly areas and facilities for bathing and outdoor cooking. Such surroundings provide an ideal setting of which form a kind of outdoor classroom to carry out group-oriented interactions and leisure activities. The complete lack of stores, shops and other distractions provides a perfect environment for which up to 35 students and five teachers can focus on the main objectives of the camp – boosting academic motivation and uncovering new leaders.

### **Reflection**

In order to gauge successes and shortcomings, evaluation and reflection are important factors to consider when conducting any kind of training, activity, program or course. For this reason, each annual camp concludes with the retrospective activity PMI (plus, minus, interesting) (De Bono, 1984) to encourage students to reflect and record their experiences from more than one viewpoint. They write about the activities they enjoy, the relationships that they build and how the overall experience affects their attitudes and thought processes. This practice also assists the instructors to reassess and improve the program. Like most years, the most prevailing student sentiments of the 2015 camp were easily distinguished through the reflective essays that were written. Five common themes that

arose from this year are as follows :

1. Teamwork involves deeper thinking to perform tasks successfully.
2. Bonds and collaboration are developed among unlikely consorts.
3. Seeing the abilities of others enhances motivation to exert more effort into learning.
4. The realization of self-improvement encourages students to become more active in their own learning process.
5. Personal growth is developed through new, tangible experiences.

### **Teamwork involves deeper thought and cooperation to perform tasks successfully.**

Whether scrubbing pots, preparing a meal or creating a skit, teamwork requires integrating individual actions successfully. Rather than depending on one leader, all members have specific and unique roles where the actions of each participant contribute to collective accomplishment. The result of team progress resides not only in the abilities of each member but also in the collective success to coordinate and synchronize individual contributions (Zaccaro, 2001). Opportunities for such collaboration in the classroom are limited, but the English Leadership Camp provides multiple opportunities to engage in collaborative hands-on activities. To illustrate this, sophomore Namiko Okawara writes,

“We cooperated with my friends to make foods and clean up dishes and set our room’s condition. . . .positive attitude can gather another people and get reliability.”

Another freshman student, Miho Okamura emphasizes the need for a collective process in leadership by writing,

“We have to work with a team to perform a great skit, have to manage time to follow a schedule. So it’s very important everybody have a leadership to do things well.”

A third student, Harriet Cananua, adds,

“Doing a skit again is fun but, making a skit and to make everyone happy with it takes a lot of thinking.”

The sentiments of all three students reflect the fact that leadership does not merely flow from developing the talents and abilities of the strongest. Rather, the team process also has a significant influence on leader and organizational effectiveness. Good leadership involves creating an inclusive environment where the contributions and voices of all have significance and meaning. As each person has numerous opportunities to participate, activities and discussions become inclusive and student-centered. This encompassing atmosphere helps to improve learning outcomes, inspires and boosts the learning spirit (Ismail, N., Atek, E., Azmi, M., & Mohamad, M., 2015).

### **Bonds and collaboration are developed among unlikely consorts**

When learners have the opportunity to help and be helped by their fellow students, they gain feelings of satisfaction and status which themselves become powerful sources of reward and motivation (Stevick, 1998). This is reflected in the way that students of different origins and age groups are able to establish strong bonds between each other. Through the activities that are conducted, upper level students are purposely partnered with lower-classmen and those with strong English competency with those with weaker abilities, joining student independence with interdependence. Freshman Mizuki Ushio reflects on this by writing,

“I could make many friend in this camp. Second year student and third year student are very kind. And their English is very well. They have inspired me with their English. I think people who join this camp is so kind. Seniors help us when we want to by somebody.”

Additionally, the only senior in the camp, Noriko Hayashi, illustrates how borders and barriers of age and ability were dissolved by simply writing,

“I could forget that I’m the only one 4<sup>th</sup> grade student in this camp.”

Eradicating divisive barriers between students opens new doors of learning that create an interactive, social process that strengthens the community. Working among unlikely consorts adds diversity, exposes new dimensions of thought, expands minds, and teaches students to harmonize with others. By doing so, learners become more invested in the tasks that they do since they all have a personal stake in it. In turn, growth is bolstered in both the individual and the group. Such collaboration transforms into increased vigor for learning new tasks and facilitates better social adeptness.

### **Seeing the abilities of others enhances motivation to exert more effort into learning.**

When students are partnered with others whose behavior is geared toward accomplishing challenging tasks, they are more likely to follow suit. Research shows that people who observe others displaying either involved or detached behaviors will act in the same manner accordingly. (Byrne & Russon, 1998; Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Freidman, Elliot, Moller, & Aarts, 2010; Levesque & Pelletier, 2003). At Leadership Camp, positive behavior and the use of English as the main channel of communication are expected to be modeled by the more advanced students to those who are less socially or linguistically capable. Consequently, the reluctant and less proficient students begin to mirror such behavior through increased participation and a stronger desire to study English. This is evident through the reflections of freshman students who share their experiences working among people with stronger English skills. Mariko Mitamura writes,

“I could make a lot of friends... their English is perfect. I’m so happy that I got along with them. Also I think

I've been inspired by them. I'm thinking I should study English very hard."

Mizuki Ushio also shares her experience working with multinational students by writing,

"There are many kind of students in this camp. But we can communication each other in English. I have to study English more harder."

Mizuki Mikawa echoes by stating her need to expand her circle of communication.

"I learned it is important to talk with many people who have never met. I could hear many things. It will be useful in the future. So I learned it is important to talk with many people and I need bravery to speak to. I don't have good communication skill. So I have to improvement it. If I do that I will be able to talk with many people."

Miho Okamura expresses her desire to exert more effort in to increasing her knowledge by stating,

"Communication with second or third year student encouraged me to do a more hard work. Their English or leadership are higher than it which first year student has. Next year, I want to do better than them."

In summary, motivation to exert more effort to self-improvement is a direct result of the more experienced and proficient students modeling positive behavior. In turn, this propels weaker students to attain what their stronger counterparts have and to be the next to lead and model in future endeavors. This process is then repeated the following year, and the cycle of leadership continues in future camps and activities.

### **The realization of self-improvement leads students to become more active in their own learning process.**

At the heart of all learning is a person's belief in his or her ability to accomplish the task (Atsuta, 2003). For language acquisition, self-confidence is paramount as it energizes learners to become positive about their own learning. It sows the seeds of purpose, pleasure in learning, and a desire to continue. A feeling of success emerges specifically when learners recognize the degree of their achievement, and such realization occurs at English and Leadership Camp. Sophomore Nanao Tsukuda reflects about her improvement by writing,

"Last year I couldn't talk with other grade students, but this year I can talk with every grade students! ...and I could use English better than last year!! and I could think that my English skill (speaking) improve!! I'm really happy."



**Photo 2 : Students step up to lead during discussions.**

Yu Matsuura realizes his progress in listening and writes,

“I participated in this LEO camp last year and it was very difficult for me because I can’t listen English well. I was not good at listening but I can understand what they want to say this year. My study wasn’t wasting. I thought I want to study more.”

Additionally, Emi Tsutae adds,

“I got lots of practice time for speak English. So, I’m better than yesterday’s skills.”

Through tangible improvements realized at camp, students expand their motivation through experiencing success and developing meaningful relationships. Accordingly, they return to the classroom with renewed energy and purpose to invest not only in their own learning process, but also with a desire to contribute to the learning community as a whole. Consequently, a ripple effect occurs as such contributions positively affect the students back at school who do not take part in the camp.

### **Personal growth is developed through new, tangible experiences.**

Student reflections also reveal that using English at Leadership Camp provides a unique medium for creating new situations in which participants have never experienced. For some, it is experiencing nature, such as stepping into the ocean for the first time or observing the beauty of glowing shrimp in the night sea. For others, it is participating in certain tasks such as playing guitar, singing songs or acting in a skit. Other personal encounters, such as being partnered with a native English speaker for the first time or sharing a cabin with foreign teachers, are memorable new adventures. With the ethnical diversity represented among the campers this year, new first-time cultural situations particularly stand out. In illustration, Yukiko Kamaya writes about her cross-cultural experience in

language by writing,

“First, I thought I have to speak English in this camp all time. So I was nervous. But actually they speaks various languages, of course English, Chinese, Korean and Tagalog. I learned new language just a little. Then I felt how important the common language is. Though I’m not good at speak English, I’m fine if I be active.”

American exchange student, Fantini Hernandez, shares an uncomfortable cultural situation that she experienced.

“I was very surprised that the baths are communal. ...I immediately decided not to go. But as it got late in the day I felt gross and it was either be stinky or must up my courage and do it, and I did it. I must admit it was an experience, and it wasn’t as bad as I thought, so I wouldn’t mind doing it again.”

Hernandez followed up on her writing with Facebook posts and reoccurring conversations about how her experience in a Japanese-style bath was a major highlight of her overall experience in a new country. What she considered awkward and unappealing turned out to be a positive encounter that gave her new appreciation for Japanese culture. Traditional classroom settings rarely offer real-life, authentic experiences like hers. Such learning at camp goes beyond academic development and becomes fertile ground for students to expand their cultural understanding and grow in character.

New endeavors and experiences also help create an inclusive community where participants experience and accept situations that they are unaccustomed to. Consequently, discrepancies in language, cultural identity, and social abilities are mitigated as students engage with various functions where learning becomes a collective, communal process that is real, unrehearsed, and purposeful. Ultimately, student’s improved attitudes and contributions carry the camp to successfully increase interaction, taking responsibility, motivation, and personal growth.

## **Conclusion**

Leadership Camp is a powerful medium to create and fortify student leaders who will in turn have a positive influence on others. Through various tasks and experiences, teamwork fosters cooperation, meaningful exchange, deeper relationships, and a rise in motivation. Participants feel positive about their own learning which creates a drive to invest greater effort into enhancing their knowledge and character. During the process, personal development and language acquisition become an enjoyable process through varied accomplishments and meaningful communication. By realizing their improvement and achievement, students gain the feeling of success, which instigates higher motivation. Ultimately, a stress-free, outdoor classroom, with multiple integrated tasks, helps advance Otemae University’s goals of attaining social responsibility, teamwork, logical thinking, analysis, creativity, planning, communication, presentation, leadership, and action.





**Photo 3: Leaders who do not jump will never fly.**

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