



Enhancing Learners Autonomy: Effects of an English Camp Program

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Abstract: Immersing learners in English can be a strategy to improve their autonomy in in English as a foreign language (EFL) learning. The objective of the present study is to analyze the improvement in factors related to learners' autonomy after the English camp, one of types of language immersion programs. This study used a convenience sampling method. The participants consisted of thirty high school students. Therefore, the present study employed a quantitative research design by distributing a set of questionnaires before and after an-eight-day English camp program. The results suggest that the most salient factor that improves after the treatment is 'important strategies' (m=3.6 to m=3.75) while factors related 'the learners' sense of self-efficacy' (m=3.75 to m=3.91) and 'the role of teacher' (m=3.47 to m=3.5) do not suggest a drastic increase. In contrast, the items related to 'the role of the feedback' (m=3.77 to m=3.58) show a decline. In this sense, the participants seem able to employ various important strategies to advance their language learning progress and improve their confidence while finding the roles of feedback they obtained during the program lessened. The results of this study imply the needs to provide comprehensible inputs to the students so that they can enhance their autonomy. The next study should involve the investigation of the effects of comprehensible inputs in an English camp toward learners' autonomy.

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Abstrak: Membenamkan siswa dalam bahasa Inggris dapat menjadi strategi untuk meningkatkan otonomi mereka dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL). Namun, terdapat studi yang terbatas yang menganalisis bagaimana kamp bahasa Inggris dapat meningkatkan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi otonomi belajar seperti peran guru, peran umpan balik, rasa efikasi diri siswa, dan strategi penting lainnya untuk meningkatkan otonomi belajar. Oleh karena itu, tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis peningkatan faktor-faktor yang terkait dengan otonomi belajar setelah kamp bahasa Inggris, salah satu jenis program pencelupan bahasa. Studi ini menggunakan metode pengambilan sampel secara kebetulan. Para peserta terdiri dari tiga puluh siswa sekolah menengah. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kuantitatif

dengan mendistribusikan seperangkat kuesioner sebelum dan setelah program kamp bahasa Inggris selama delapan hari. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa faktor yang paling menonjol yang meningkat setelah perlakuan adalah 'strategi penting' (m=3.6 menjadi m=3.75) sementara faktor yang terkait dengan 'rasa percaya diri siswa' (m=3.75 menjadi m=3.91) dan 'peran guru' (m=3.47 menjadi m=3.5) tidak menunjukkan peningkatan yang drastis. Sebaliknya, item-item yang terkait dengan 'peran umpan balik' (m=3.77 ke m=3.58) menunjukkan penurunan. Dalam hal ini, para peserta tampaknya mampu menggunakan berbagai strategi penting untuk memajukan kemajuan pembelajaran bahasa mereka dan meningkatkan kepercayaan diri mereka sambil menemukan peran umpan balik yang mereka peroleh selama program berkurang. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan perlunya memberikan masukan yang dapat dipahami kepada siswa agar mereka dapat meningkatkan otonomi mereka. Studi berikutnya harus melibatkan penyelidikan tentang efek input yang dapat dipahami dalam sebuah kamp bahasa Inggris terhadap otonomi belajar.

Keywords: *Autonomy, English Camp, Immersion Program, Quantitative Research Design*

INTRODUCTION

Improving the autonomy of learners should be a primary focus in language learning and teaching, due to its significant influence on various important aspects of learners' progress. Within this context, learners' autonomy refers to one's capacity to take responsibility for his/her own learning (Hu & Zhang, 2017). This concept is of utmost importance, as learners' autonomy is closely linked to their attachment with the learning process, the acquisition of knowledge, and the enhancement of critical thinking skills (Dixson, 2015). In this regard, autonomous learners possess certain characteristics, including the ability to make intellectual decisions about their own learning, develop a sense of responsibility through social and collaborative learning, and be aware of their rights as learners (Sinclair, 1999). Therefore, the degree of learners' autonomy in learning can serve as a reliable indicator of their level of engagement, with higher levels of

engagement being associated with greater autonomy (Skinner et al, 2008). Moreover, changes in learners' autonomy can also have positive effects on their emotional, psychological, and behavioral aspects as language learners (Jang et al, 2016). In this sense, autonomous learners might have their emotional and psychological needs, such as motivation and confidence, fulfilled through the learning process. The latter might lead to more favorable attitudes towards the target language. For instance, an autonomous learner is more inclined to actively participate in the classroom, thereby acquiring more knowledge of the target language and demonstrating a higher level of critical thinking in relation to the learning process. Thus, the characteristics of autonomous learners can be seen from their ease in linguistic performance and their confidence with language skills (Mistar, 2015). It can be said that autonomous learners are found to be more confident than less autonomous learners, inferring the advantages

of being autonomous learners. Another significant impact of learners' autonomy is its association with the success of teachers in language learning and teaching, as well as the improvement of learners' enthusiasm (Derakhshan et al, 2019). From these observations, it can be concluded that learners' autonomy should be given utmost priority in language learning and teaching.

Considering its significant function in the language learning process, extensive research has been conducted on learners' autonomy. Cotterall (1999) investigates several key factors that contribute to the development of autonomous learners. The participants in her study were college students joined an English for Academic Purposes course. Her research employed a series of questionnaires that examined variables such as the roles of teachers and feedback, learners' self-efficacy, essential strategies, behavior related to learning strategies, and the nature of language learning. The findings of her study indicate the importance of raising students' awareness about the advantages of utilizing monitoring and evaluating strategies. Additionally, teachers should facilitate more discussions on the role of feedback in language learning. Furthermore, Adara (2020) analyzes the influences of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) to increase learners' autonomy and motivation. The study reveals that integrating MALL does not significantly improve learners' autonomy and motivation. Similarly, Zenouzagh, Admiraal, and Saab (2023) examine the effects of integrating multimodal and text-based Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) on promoting learners' autonomy, the engagement of learners, learners' satisfaction, and writing quality in technology. Their research

highlights the significance of various aspects, including learners' attitudes, self-efficacy, teachers' presence and digital competence, curriculum, and internet quality and support, in determining learners' satisfaction and autonomy during the learning process. In contrast to the aforementioned studies, Borg and Alshumaimeri (2019) delve into the belief systems, practices, and challenges faced by a group of EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia in their quest to enhance learners' autonomy. Despite learners' autonomy being a primary goal in language classrooms, this study reveals that promoting learners' autonomy is less feasible due to factors such as the existing curriculum, society, and culture. Additionally, the lack of motivation and low English language proficiency pose significant challenges for these teachers in fostering learners' autonomy. The aforementioned studies shed light on various aspects of learners' autonomy that can be explored to enhance this aspect among learners. However, those studies did not specifically analyze the effects of immersion program such as an English camp toward learners' autonomy, making a gap in the research toward autonomy in English learning and teaching.

In addition to the enhancement of language learners' individual development, learners' autonomy aligns well with the contemporary language teachers' learner-centered approach (Sakai, Takagi & Chu, 2010; Ushioda, 1996). This learner-centered approach places learners at the forefront of the learning process, contrasting the teacher-centered approach where teachers are the primary source of knowledge in the classroom and solely responsible for the materials and methods provided to students (Bremmer, Sakata, & Cameron, 2022). It has been argued that

learners' autonomy is closely intertwined with the learner-centered approach as it encourages learners to actively participate in the process of learning and teaching both inside and outside the classroom, inferring a shared responsibility between teachers and learners in the language learning process (Boyadzhieva, 2016). Therefore, in the learner-centered approach, students are entrusted with the responsibility to determine the pace of their own learning, contribute to the design of learning materials, and select suitable approaches offered by teachers. When implemented effectively, the learner-centered approach can foster self-determined autonomous learners rather than learners who are controlled by teachers (Liu, 2015). However, as previously mentioned by Boyadzhieva (2016), the learner-centered approach should be implemented within the context of dual control between teachers and learners. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to create a supportive and socially beneficial environment that promotes autonomy through interactions (Han, 2021). These interactions can be facilitated through various strategies, such as language immersion programs. The following paragraph will delve into the scope of language immersion programs and their relationship with learners' autonomy and the learner-centered approach.

Certain advantages associated with language immersion programs in relation to the development of learners' autonomy have been argued. Within this framework, language immersion programs can be defined as a type of bilingual education wherein learners are placed in a controlled language environment where at least half of their instruction is delivered in the target language (Lyster & Genesee, 2012). In light of this, the target

language can be utilized either entirely or partially throughout the entire duration of the sessions, thereby enhancing language skills through the replication of real-life scenarios (Er & Mirici, 2015). Moreover, the language immersion program is closely associated with a learner-centered approach. The provision and exploration of learner-centered classes play a central role in the language immersion program (Bell'Aver & Rabelo, 2020). In this context, when teaching a language through an immersion program, it is crucial for teachers to tailor the classroom setting to cater to the needs of the learners, thereby fostering learners' autonomy during the language learning process. Additionally, one form of language immersion program is the English camp, which can be described as a program wherein participants are immersed in an environment where only English is spoken (Noguchi, 2019), thus enhancing their language skills through the wash-back effects (Aswad, 2017). There have been numerous studies that investigate the impacts of English camps on various aspects of language learning and teaching. For instance, a study by Ready and Indrayani (2021) examines how an English camp creates a supportive language environment for the participants. Using a descriptive qualitative research design, this study interviewed the tutors, the administrators, and the program staff. The findings of their study suggest the implementation of multiple activities in English camps to create an enjoyable environment for learning English as a mean that helps the augmentation of learners' autonomy. Furthermore, Garhani & Yusup (2021) explore learners' motivation for participating in English camps. Drawing on the perspectives of self-determination theory,

the results of Garhani and Yusup's (2021) study indicate the efficacy of authentic learning in enhancing learners' motivation. On the other hand, Chien (2020) analyzes the perceptions of a group of pre-service teachers in Taiwan regarding English camps. The findings of Chien's (2020) study identify six key factors for giving pre-service teachers with the necessary competence and teaching skills in English camps. Despite the multitude aspects of the effects of language immersion program investigated in those studies, they did not specifically analyze how an immersion program can contribute to the development of learners' autonomy.

In spite of the insights provided by the above studies, there is a paucity of studies that examine how an English camp improves factors related to learners' autonomy. **As a result, it can be challenging for educators or researchers that want to provide or develop a language immersion program with the objective to develop learners' autonomy. Thus, this is a problem that the present study aims to tackle.** Therefore, the current study will investigate the improvement of factors surrounding learners' autonomy after the English camp. This study can contribute to the understanding of the intricate nature of EFL learners' autonomy as well as the factors that influence the advancement of learners' autonomy, especially within the framework of language immersion program. Following are the hypotheses of this study:

1. The treatment does not improve the factors related to learners' autonomy.
2. The treatment improves the factors related to learners' autonomy.

Thus, the present study is guided by following research question:

RQ.1 Which factors related to learners' autonomy improves after the English camp?

RQ.2 What is the most salient factors improved after the English camp?

METHOD

Research Design

The present study applied a quantitative research design. We opted for quantitative research design as it yields empirical data that can be distinctly conveyed through statistical analysis and numerical representation (Williams, 2021). Thus, the current study used a survey which consists of two sections. While the first section records the demographic information of the participants, the second section is a set of items adapted from Cotterall's (1999) questionnaire. To ensure the validity and the reliability of the questionnaire, a preliminary study was conducted. Although Cotterall's (1999) questionnaires used six variables (teacher's role, feedback's role, learner's sense of self-efficacy, important strategies, dimensions of strategies-related acts, and language learning's nature), the present study only used the initial four factors because the items in dimensions of strategies-related acts and language learning's nature do not show the needed reliability and the validity for the present study.

The preliminary study' results show a coefficient of 0.816 and Cronbach Alpha ($\alpha = .72$), suggesting the reliability and the validity of every item in the questionnaire according to Taber (2018). The questionnaire consists of thirteen items using a Likert scale. Following are four responses used in the questionnaire; strongly agree, agree, disagree,

strongly disagree. In order to see the changes in the participants’ autonomy, the questionnaires were distributed before and after the English camp. We used Google Forms to distribute the questionnaires to the participants. In addition, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 23 is applied to measure mean and standard deviation of the questionnaires’ results. We used mean and standard deviation to analyze the improvement in learners’ autonomy because mean and standard deviation facilitate the quantifiable assessment of opinions or subjective information, thereby establishing a framework for comparative analysis (Collins, 2024).

Participants

This study used a convenience sampling method. We opted for this sampling method because it allows the researchers to choose the participants in an effective and less-time consuming way (Golzar et al., 2022). In this regard, the participants were chosen because the convenience to contact the school administrator that could give us access to the the participants. Furthermore, the participants of the current study are thirty high school students from a public school in Bekasi, Indonesia. The inclusion criteria are students age 18 years old or above who joined the English camp from 17 July 2023 to 24 July 2023. We excluded underage students because contacting the parents or the guardians of each participant might be difficult. The demographic insights of the participants of the English camp are described in the following table:

Table 1

Demographic Insights of the Participants

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	12	40
	Female	18	60
Age group	18	21	70
	19	9	30
Years of learning English	>10 years	7	23
	> 5-9 years	9	30
	< 1-4 years	14	47

Procedures

The present sub-section aims to describe the procedures of the English camp. The latter is created to a venue in which the participants are instructed to communicate in English only with the tutors, the staff as well as other participants. It is designed to make the participants feel more comfortable to express themselves in English. Lasted for eight days, following table illustrates the activities of the English camp:

Table 2

Activities in the English camp

Time	Activities	Descriptions of the activity
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5-7 A.M	Learning new vocabulary and English expressions	The participants start their day by learning 15 English words and five short expressions. In addition, they are encouraged to practice their newly-found knowledge with other participants in the breakfast nook or other areas in the English camp.
10 A.M- 12 P.M	Grammar Class	In this session, grammar sets were taught to the participants. However, the focus is to refresh the participants' knowledge instead of telling them to memorize the grammar sets. Then, the participants were asked to practice the grammar sets in writing or speaking forms.
4-6 PM	Speaking/Pronunciation class	Speaking strategies were taught to the participants in this session. Besides that, this session focused on improving the participants' pronunciation skills.
8-9 PM	Study club	During this session, the participants were put into numerous teams. Then, they were tasked to make a video about their experience on that particular day. The video would be uploaded to their individual social media accounts. The best video would be uploaded into the English camp's social media accounts.

In addition to the above activities, each participant was encouraged to communicate only in English throughout the day with the instructors, the staff and other participants.

There were also free sessions where the participants could explore the camp and communicate using English in real life conditions such as buying products in the supermarkets, asking for the directions or else.

The English camp was designed to mimic the daily life interactions by giving the participants, the tutors and the staff chances to interact with each other in English. However, it seems important to note that other English camps might differ in terms of activities or treatments given to the participants.

Ethical Forms

Several ethical considerations were performed in the present study. Firstly, the researchers described the purposes of the present study to the participants. Secondly, the present study only used data from the participants over 18 years old. In order to obtain the informed consents from the participants, we ensured them that their personal information and responses would only be used for this research's purposes. We also ensured the participants' anonymity would be kept. By ensuring the participants that their responses would be secured and exclusively used for this study's purposes, the participants might be more relaxed to give their responses toward the English camp. In addition, data used in the present study were only ones from the consented participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table 3

The Results of the Questionnaires

Before the English Camp	Mean	Std. Dev	After the English Camp	Mean	Std. Dev
Teachers' roles	3.47	0.507	Teachers' roles	3.5	0.674
Feedback's roles	3.77	0.43	Feedback's roles	3.58	0.668
The learner's sense of self-efficacy	3.87	0.346	The learner's sense of self-efficacy	3.91	0.288
Important strategies	3.6	0.563	Important strategies	3.75	0.45

Discussion

The findings of the questionnaires in the present investigation illustrate the rise in the factors linked to 'important strategies'. In this respect, important strategies involve a body of knowledge towards substantial tactics for attaining successful learning, particularly in the context of independent learning (Cotterall, 1999). For example, a learner can commit more English words to memory in order to engage in communication with individuals, view English videos on the internet, resort to non-verbal communication when they cannot recall the vocabulary, or simply engage in language practice with other learners and instructors. Therefore, it can be deduced that the participants possess the ability to recognize the advantages of important strategies or employ them to bolster independent learning following the English camp.

A great deal of studies has also posited the utilization of learning strategies to augment learners' self-governance. In this regard, learning strategies can be defined as certain techniques or approaches applied by the learners to ease their progress in developing skills in the target language, facilitating the internalization of the knowledge of the target language (Hardan, 2013). In light of this, an investigation conducted by Rezalou and Altay (2022) scrutinizes the ramifications of social, metacognitive, and cognitive learning strategies on the cultivation of learners' self-governance. Furthermore, it analyzes the correlation between learners' self-governance and their accomplishments in language classrooms. Their investigation unearths a notable association between learners' academic progression and their implementation of pedagogical approaches. In this sense, comprehending strategies to acquire language skills can be an important point to enhance learners' autonomy (Mistar, 2015). Additionally, the utilization of pedagogical approaches significantly enhances learners' self-governance. Furthermore, the findings from a study conducted by Daflizar, Sulistiyo, and Kamil (2022) deduce that highly self-governing learners employ more pedagogical approaches both inside and outside the classroom, suggesting that the more self-governing learners are, the greater their propensity to seek pedagogical approaches during the language acquisition process. Comparable outcomes have also been discovered in other studies (Ceylan, 2015; Samaie et al., 2015). It can be posited that the frequent utilization of learning strategies exhibits a strong correlation with learners' autonomy.

Pertaining to the English camp, this program appears to be valuable in imparting knowledge to participants regarding the utilization of pedagogical approaches. Thus, it seems imperative for educators to introduce a variety of learning strategies that can be employed by students to aid them during the language acquisition process. However, as suggested by Daflizar et al. (2022), learning strategies employed should be tailored to students' characteristics in order to ensure the effectiveness of those strategies to students' language skills improvement. It is because language learning strategies are a set of complex and dynamic ideas and actions chosen by learners through some degree of consciousness depending on the contexts of the task itself (Oxford, 2017). In this regard, learners have a certain degree of freedom to choose or combine specific strategies they need to deal with different tasks. It can be concluded that the English camp helps the participants to find more suitable important strategies to ease them during the program. However, types of learning strategies used by the participants to assist them during the English camp need to be explored further in the next study.

Next, the learner's sense of self-efficacy is shown to be enhanced after the English camp. Against this backdrop, learners' self-efficacy refers to one's beliefs toward their capability (Artino, 2012) and to successfully complete a task (Graham, 2022). It has been asserted that self-efficacy is closely linked with learners' autonomy. As learners possess constructive beliefs toward their learning progress, they will be more autonomous in learning. The latter notion has been proven in several studies (Csizér et al, 2021; Mickwitz & Suojala, 2021; Xiao, 2015). In regards to the English camp,

the multiple tasks given during the camp might incite the participants' self-efficacy. As they finish the tasks, their sense of accomplishment might lead to the increase in the participants' self-efficacy. However, a further study that specifically analyses how the English camp builds learners' self-efficacy needs to be conducted prior to deciding the correlation among the improvement of learners' autonomy, self-efficacy and the English camp.

However, the results indicate that the roles of feedback in the present study decrease after the English camp. In this regard, feedback involves the purposes and origins of feedback in language learning (Cotterall, 1999). Thus, the present study would limit its discussion to how feedback is given in the context of the English camp. Although numerous studies show an increase in learners' autonomy due to the provision of feedback (Dmitrenko & Budas, 2021; Han, 2021; Wiraningsih & Dewi, 2020), the results of Cotterall (1999) suggest the less effective impacts of feedback to learners' autonomy, implying that learners might not understand the role of monitoring and evaluating learning process. It can be inferred that despite having relatively high levels of autonomy in other factors, the participants in the present study might not comprehend the importance of evaluating their performance. In addition, they might find it difficult to give feedback to each other. Thus, providing concise strategies to give peer feedback to the participants seems important before conducting a program such as one conducted in the present study. In addition, in the context of the English camp, the tutors need to set a specific session to provide constructive feedback to the participants' performance so that they would know the roles

of feedback to their language skills' development.

Finally, the roles of teachers are found to be the least salient factor despite showing a slight incline after the English camp. It has been posited that teachers have a significant influence to enhance learners' autonomy (Han, 2014). It is because the improvement of learners' autonomy can be achieved through diverse teaching strategies conducted by teachers (Karimah, 2020). For instance, teachers can get students more involved in learning process through the material designing or choices. In addition, asking students' preferences for learning activities can make learners more attached with the learning process. Thus, as the focal point in learner-centered approach, the roles of teachers should be relegated as the facilitators instead of the centers of learning (Azhariah et al, 2023). In addition, it has been argued that teachers should focus on supporting students when they move from one stage of language acquisition to another instead of controlling students' language skill acquisition (Mistar, 2015). Thus, the provision of learning strategies' materials from teachers should be given in an indirect manner such as clues or hints during the session in order support their autonomous learning. Related to the English camp, the tutors should develop more activities that involve the participants in the decision-making process so that they might see the roles of tutors for improving their autonomy. For instance, the tutors can ask the participants about their preferences in learning activities instead of setting ones without additional inputs from the participants. The latter point makes the needs for conducting needs analysis before conducting a program such as the English camp.

CONCLUSION

The current study analyzed the improvement in factors related to learners' autonomy after the English camp. Thus, the current research applied a quantitative research design by administering a set of questionnaires adapted from Cotterall (1999) to thirty high school students from Bekasi, Indonesia. The outcomes of the present study illustrate the improvement in the application of important strategies among the participants after the English camp. Although other factors such as the learners' sense of self-efficacy and teachers' roles do not show a significant incline, a decrease is shown in the role of feedback. Therefore, the results imply that the participants might apply important strategies to help them communicate in English during the English camp. The results also indicate the improvement in learners' sense of confidence in their English skills. The results of the present study contribute to the provision of insights on factors related to the learners' autonomy that can be improved through an English camp.

Several implications can be deduced from the results. First, learners might resort to use certain strategies such as code mixing, using gestures, or else to deal with the challenges while communicating in the target language. In addition, they might seek suggestions from peers or learn more additional materials to get through the challenges (Saeed, 2021). Thus, the English camp or other language immersion programs should provide enough comprehensible inputs toward strategies that can be used by the students to solve their communication problems to augment their autonomy. As argued by Oxford (2017), learning strategies can be taught but the timing of the use of certain learning strategies will

depend on how learners deem it appropriate or not according to multiple personal and contextual factors of learners. Second, a language immersion program such as the English camp might be advantageous for the development of learners' sense of self-efficacy. As the participants are given a supportive environment to communicate in the target language, they might be more confident to practice, improving their language skills as the wash back effect. Next, the outcomes of the present study indicate that the participants value the roles of feedback and teachers lessen after the program. It can be caused by the lack of constructive feedback given during the program or the tutors' focus to fluency instead of accuracy. Therefore, the tutors of the English camp should provide the participants with ample feedback so that they participants can improve their linguistic performance.

Although the present study tried to reduce the limitations, there are some points that can be enhanced for further studies. Firstly, the size of the participants can be considered as decent but it might not reflect the whole population as it did not involve a random sampling. A study involving a bigger size of participants might obtain more results that reflect the population of EFL learners in Indonesia. In this regard, the next study should involve a greater number of participants which reflects the population of EFL learners in Indonesia instead of the participants from same high school like one in the present study. Secondly, as the English camp only lasted for eight days, it might not yield deeper insights toward the improvement of learners' autonomy. Thus, the upcoming investigation should investigate a longer language immersion program to compare their results with ones from the current study. Then, the

present study only applied a quantitative research design. Applying a more complex research design such as mixed-method research design might yield deeper information toward the influences of the English camp to learners' autonomy. In addition, an ethnography or Q methodology might obtain more comprehensive results that can reveal the complexity of learners' autonomy. Next, a classroom observation or students' journals can be preferable research instruments to analyze the sophisticated process of language learning in the language immersion setting such as the English camp. Related to the suggestions for further studies, an analysis toward other aspects of learning such as learners' motivation or beliefs toward the language immersion program can be a suitable idea for next studies as they are closely related with learners' autonomy. In addition, further study should examine the improvement of learners' autonomy after the provision of comprehensible inputs in an English camp.

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