Developing and Calibrating an Autonomy Scale for EFL Learners through an Adapted Model of Task Difficulty

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ABSTRACT

Improving learner autonomy is one of the significant factors in enabling learners to manage difficulties they encounter during the language production process and different language learning situations. The purpose of this study was to deploy and create one model for task difficulty to account for the role and influence that it can have on developing and calibrating a new scale of learner autonomy. The researchers aimed to determine the extent and ways in which varying task difficulty levels based on the adapted model can change the criteria for assessing learner autonomy and how learners assess their independence based on the adapted task model with various difficulty levels. A qualitative design was implemented to answer the research questions using MAX QDA2020 software to analyze the qualitative data. To fulfill this objective, 120 Iranian EFL learners including 62 male and 58 female learners at an intermediate level at the Tehran Institute of Technology were asked to take part in task difficulty questionnaires and interviews and a piloted task with different difficulty conditions. Following the creation of a new model of task difficulty through qualitative questionnaires, the calibrated scale for autonomy was developed. The result of the qualitative phase revealed that factors such as classmates, work conditions, and time have a significant impact on task difficulty, but gender and age have the least influence on it. The Learner Autonomy scale is divided into three factors Decision-Making, work-schedule, and Work method and learner autonomy can affect learning conditions and teacher-student relations respectively. Following the autonomy scale by teachers can enhance the possibility of transferring language classrooms from mere teacher-centered to more learner-centered with higher chance of overcoming language tasks' barriers.

Keywords: Learner Autonomy; Task Difficulty; Work Conditions; Work-Scheduling

INTRODUCTION

The concept of task difficulty developed from the requirement to set up criteria for orchestrating assignments from simple to difficult in a syllabus to encourage learners' inter-language (Brown et al., 2002). They did one of the endeavors to group tasks from simple to difficult. They recognized three diverse types of assignments (i.e., Inactive, Energetic, and Unique), which were displayed as extending from simple to difficult. "Bangalore Communicative Educating Project" in India was another recommendation for sequencing tasks, in which (Prabhu, 1987) proposed the reviewing of assignments based on criteria, which he depicted as "rough measures of cognitive complexity". In examining how learner independence is translated in a real "concrete dialect instruction venture "one needs to be mindful of the assortment of elucidations circulating in the organization; the relations among these elucidations in the particular setting; and the associations among distinctive angles of the project (i.e., assumptions, roles, and practices). Therefore, there are spectrums of variables that influence learner autonomy. One factor is the learning context and activities. The level of learner autonomy fluctuates depending on the different contexts and activities learners might encounter. This will result in a variation in the amount of assistance that learners might need to fulfill a task.

One factor that can contribute to the variation in the required learning assistance is task difficulty. However, in elaborating on task difficulty, first, it is necessary to define what the term 'Task' means in language learning and what components it has and then focus on task difficulty. Moreover, autonomy has a political function, which is related to the idea of individual freedom of choice. Its application in education has demonstrated that learners are unable to 'take control' or make choices about their learning unless they are free to do so (Ecclestone, 2002). Practically, it means that disadvantages of certain groups in the wider population, educational policies, school curricula, and the prescribed use of textbooks, can all justify why the development of autonomy might have been hindered. the language curriculum and its educational activities are traditional based in which the role of learners as the core of learning has been ignored. Therefore, it is essential to discover how such constraints may be lifted in every learning context by teachers' help, task features, materials' characteristics, or other contextual variables.

Despite a large amount of theory development over the years, another problem of the concept of autonomy is its unclear meaning, (Benson, 2001). It sometimes seems as if autonomy has become an all-encompassing term, covering other terms such as motivation (Ushioda, 1996) awareness (Van Lier, 1996) and interaction (Kohonen, 1992). Western teachers and academics have largely promoted the idea of learner autonomy, but when attempts are made to implement it, further afield difficulties are encountered. Based on the researchers' experience, Iranian EFL learners even at advanced levels are often teacher-dependent, as decisions are made by their teachers who manage their learning, solve their problems, and do the tasks which need to be managed by the learners themselves. Therefore, more attention must be paid to a shift from this teacher-centered approach to a more learner-centered one in which language learners are empowered to take care of their learning, discover their strengths and weaknesses, and cope with unforeseen problems in learning the language to become autonomous learners. Moreover, a number of research findings in Iran have proven the positive impact of learner autonomy on various aspects of language learning such as: 'Challenges in Promoting EFL Learners' Autonomy: Iranian EFL Teachers' Perspectives' ,or 'The Impact of CALL on Iranian EFL Learners' Autonomy' (Farivar & Rahimi, 2015). However, in all mentioned studies, the theoretical frameworks and instruments which were implemented to define and measure learner autonomy in the local context have been developed by western countries. The question that remains to be answered is whether an Iranian framework and calibration would better meet the local learning objectives or not, and how task difficulty would affect such a calibration. Based on the researchers' observations and interviews with learners, it seems that the more difficult the

task of language learning is, the less autonomous the learner will be in doing a task independently and efficiently as (s)he will request higher support from teachers and other resources to do the task. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to develop a new model of task difficulty through an extensive literature review and designed questionnaires and interviews with teachers and learners to calibrate a new scale for autonomy. Then the impact of this scale on learners' performance and language production independently is tested.

Therefore, regarding the mentioned problem, gap, and purpose above, the following questions were developed.

In what ways varying task difficulty levels based on the adapted model can change the criteria for assessing learner autonomy?

How does task difficulty and dynamic assessment interact to significantly affect EFL learners' autonomy?

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Task difficulty

Many researchers with various insights have characterized tasks in language learning. Task is a movement in which meaning is essential; there are a few kinds of communication tasks to unravel; there are a few sorts of relationships to compare real-world tasks; task completion has a few needs; and the evaluation of the assignment or task is in terms of its result. Concurring to Bygate (2001), is that as it might, tasks are vulnerable to academic intercession; tasks can be impacted by learner choice and are possibly reinterpreted by learners. As Bygate (2001) pointed out, assignments may have an inactive, controllable nature if utilized for investigation, and they may incorporate more energetically and imply qualities if implemented for educating purposes. That is why they pointed out that it may be vital to clarify the dentition of assignments beneath diverse circumstances, how to decide the tasks` objectives, and how to group tasks. In the field of task-based investigation, there exist two diverse conceptualizations of task difficulty. Robinson (2001), characterizes task difficulty as "the result of the attention, memory, thinking, and other data handling requests forced by the structure of the assignment on the dialect learner" (p. 28). In his show, task difficulty relates to learners' recognition of errand requests and variables that contribute to contrasts between learners in their generation, such as capacity, tenses, certainty, or inspiration. Particularly, discernments of task difficulty are affected by the learner's capacity and emotional components. Tavakoli (2009) investigated task difficulty via task performance following by interviews to identify factors that affect task difficulty. Performing four narrative tasks, the learners found cognitive and linguistic tasks as two significant factors in making a task difficult. Robinson (2015) states that stabilization; simplification, automation, restructuring and complexity should be considered for using tasks in a language syllabus. He discusses that these five steps provide a rigid foundation for sequencing a task. Skehan (2018) adds some significant information about the principles that must be addressed. Regarding task difficulty, Skehan argues that "task difficulty needs to be analyzed distinctly for the Conceptualizer and the Formulator" (Skehan, 2018, p. 27).

Learner Autonomy

Learner independence which centers on duty for learning forms, as well as learner reaction, has been ignored to be a central concern in the history of language learning (Barfield & Brown, 2007; Benson, 2001, 2007; Dam, 1995; Holec, 1981, 1988; Murphy, 2008; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003; Lamb & Reinders, 2007; Little, 2007) . (Moore, 2015) studied the benefits of LA, learners can identify their learning goals, in addition students implement a variety of learning techniques and skills and organize their learning without easily. Also, they process the information correctly and evaluate their learning. (Little, 2022) proposed students' need for autonomy as a sense of connection, skill, and efficiency, in addition it gives them freedom and flexibility to choose their preparation methods for class. Mousavi (2017) applied a study to analyze the present condition of developing language learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context. In this study, some merits like relevance to real-world, increasing learners' investment in their learning, simplifying objectives, and teacher's accountability were focused. Thanh Nga (2014) conducted a study to investigate the extent to which Vietnamese teachers understood the concept of learner autonomy and how their beliefs about this concept were applied in their teaching practices. His findings revealed that learner autonomy cannot be fostered without considering the role of the local and contextual environment. Tuan (2021) claimed that one of the important goals for students in any language program is learner autonomy, specifically based on the fact that the majority of the country's universities use a credit-based system that requires them to assume higher responsibility for their learning. Analyzing the concept of learner autonomy, understanding the importance of increasing learner autonomy for student learning, and understanding methods to increase it in particular teaching contexts must be focused if teachers are going to adhere to the policies that learner autonomy is an unavoidable part of the teaching-learning process.

Learning autonomously relies on the advancement of self-access learning centers and preparing learners as a central focus for the experiment. Even though Holec (1981) considered independence as a highlight for the learner, it was moreover utilized to portray learning circumstances. Holec highlights educators as facilitators who can offer assistance to create learner autonomy to:

(1) Offer assistance to learners to raise their mindfulness of obligation and motivation;

(2) Offer assistance to learners arranges and carry out their free learning tasks;

(3) Offer assistance to learners' screen and assessing their learning;

Models of Autonomy

Benson (2001) was the first one who introduced the idea of different ways of introducing the concept of autonomy. Technical, psychological, and political terms were used to explain three important versions of autonomy in the language education system. The model contains four perspectives on autonomy, each with a different focus:

- Technical perspective: focus on the physical situation.
- Psychological perspective: focus on characteristics of learners
- Sociocultural perspective: focus on mediated learning. (Two versions of the sociocultural perspective are included which are labeled here as Sociocultural I and II.)

Political-critical perspective: focuses on ideologies, access, and power structures.

Nunan's (1997) attempt to present a five-level model of learner autonomy which involve:' learner action' – 'awareness', 'involvement', 'intervention', 'creation', and 'transcendence'.

Littlewood's (1997) three-phase model includes aspects of language learning, learning approach, and personal improvement. In language learning, autonomy involves 'an ability to act independently with the language and use it to communicate some personal goals in real, le situations which is not predictable'.

Macaro (1997) presented to some extent a similar model with three stages which involve language competence autonomy', language learning competence autonomy', and choice and action autonomy'. The resource book of Scharle and Szabó (2000) for the development of autonomy presented a three-phase model involving 'increasing awareness', ' attitudes changing', and 'transfer of roles' (Littlewood, 1999) presented a widely cited distinction between 'proactive' autonomy, which affirms individuality and sets up directions which they have created', and reactive autonomy, 'which does not create its directions but, once a direction has been initiated, makes learners able to organize their resources autonomously to reach their goal. An attempt to present learner autonomy levels to control language learning and teaching processes in three headings –management of learning, cognitive processing, and the teaching content (Benson, 2001). These models, however, believe that the relationship between autonomy development and proficiency in language does not cause any problems.

Pennycook (1997) first introduced the idea of 'mainstream' autonomy, identified by its concern with individual learner psychology and learning strategies, into the literature. He replaced this concern with the view that in Autonomy the context of the global spread of ELT, autonomy focuses on assisting students to be active in English and confront a range of cultural structures as they learn English.

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS

This study was conducted over 120 intermediate EFL learners whose first language was Persian and was selected among 180 based on their performance on PET (Preliminary English Test). The age range of these 62 males and 58 female learners falls between 20 and 30. They were selected based on convenient nonrandom sampling and then homogenized through PET test. Regarding the pass score of 70 out of 100 for this test, only 120 learners could afford achieving these score and 60 others failed.

INSTRUMENTS

The participants of this study were studying American English File 3 written by Christina Latham-Koenig, Clive Oxen den, and Paul Seligson, which is the intermediate level of language learning. The book was published in 2016 and has 10 units from which every semester two units are covered. The students cover the book in 5 semesters in 8 months. Every unit of this book which has two sections of A and B covers four skills of Speaking, listening, reading, and writing plus sub-skills of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

Interviews

The first set of interviews was carried out with six EFL teachers who had experience in teaching tasks. This set of interviews was implemented to elicit aspects that revealed difficulty levels from the perspective of the teachers. In the second set when students are exposed to tasks with various difficulty levels in the four experimental groups, those students will also be interviewed to see the effect of task difficulty on their autonomy. In so doing, face-to-face interviews were conducted with learners of the mentioned language schools in Tehran to broaden the scope and depth

of the search in addition to comprehensive studying of the relevant literature. The interviews were managed by the researchers in an informal setting to broaden their understanding of the context.

Task difficulty questionnaire

Studying, comparing, and analyzing different frameworks of task difficulty and autonomy, which have already been used in different TBLT contexts, and extracting their common elements, the researchers gave open-ended questions, which were developed based on reviewing previous frameworks and eliciting their common factors, to the participants. Open-ended questions were applied to better capture the students' views and provide further comments regarding the procedure they have been through. To get a better perspective of the students while performing various tasks, an observation checklist that focuses on different aspects of the difficulty of the task was given to the teachers to seek their ideas about task difficulty and get more information about their students 'performance. This checklist was also developed by the researchers based on a thorough literature review.

Learner autonomy questionnaire

Following the study of available autonomy literature and questionnaires, the research team came up with the common questions among them. Then the open-ended questions were designed by the researchers and given to the team of six experienced teachers who had already been trained over autonomy and task in their in-service training to share their opinion. Teachers were asked to review the questions and assess each item based on four criteria including relevancy, clarity, simplicity, and necessity Following the piloting of the open-ended questions and the existing identified categories of autonomy such as learners' level of independence and autonomy in doing the easy and difficult tasks, the researchers finalized a questionnaire to be shared among the learners for the qualitative part of the study.

Observations

Two sets of observation checklists were developed, one for task difficulty and one for autonomy while implementing the real developed and adapted model to guarantee the practicality of the created model of task difficulty and autonomy scale in the context of language learning in Iran. The set for autonomy was called out both by the researcher and the teacher. The observation checklist has 20 items that focus on different items such as the learners" performance, stages of doing the task, the condition of doing the task, problems of doing the task, problems, and errors that happen during the task, and so on. Later, the inconsistencies of the model became obvious to the researchers and novel ideas can be provided by them while calibrating different aspects of the task model and autonomy scale.

<div align="center">

PROCEDURE

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The selected 120 learners were divided into four groups with 30 learners in each one. In two groups, the easy task was practiced through dynamic assessment in one group and without dynamic assessment in the other. Moreover, in two other groups, the researcher carried out the difficult task with dynamic assessment in one and without it in the other. Another group of 30 participants with similar characteristics to the target sample participated in the pilot study to pilot the PET and carry out item analysis and reliability estimates.

In the second phase, when the newly calibrated autonomy questionnaire was validated, the researchers administered it to participants. Besides the researchers, six teachers, who were among the instructors of the Tehran Institute of Technology institute and had experience in teaching and measuring speaking and writing for at least seven years, participated as raters. All the participants answered the questions of the qualitative questionnaire about the

autonomy and independence of them to manage the task. Then the given answers in the questionnaires besides the interviews were analyzed through MAX QDA to develop the scale of autonomy which is driven from the reactions of the participants to the managed task with four separate conditions.

DESIGN

Since the strategy chosen to analyze the data, given the relationship between one structure and another one and the identification of this theory, requires the discovery and intuition of qualitative research data, a comprehensive software package is needed to cover it. The qualitative section can also identify the relationships between the variables and help the researchers in this field. Therefore, the MAX QDA2020 Pro software package was used in this research. Interviews and observations were implemented to monitor the treatment of the subjects to see what effect the treatment exerted on the experimented learners. In addition, questionnaires for both task difficulty and autonomy were used to provide more accurate data for analysis.

RESULTS

Based on the conducted research, data from four groups of participants were collected in this study. In the first part, 120 quality questionnaires, which included 6 open-ended questions, were distributed among the learners. In the second part, an interview was conducted among those 120 EFL language learners who received the questionnaire and their voices were recorded. Finally, in the third part, the final interview was conducted among four divided groups and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1- Data Collection Groups

|	Frequency	Percent	Percent (valid)	Percent (cum.)
Interview	10	66.7	66.7	66.7
Observation	4	26.7	26.7	93.3
Questionnaire	1	6.7	6.7	100.0
TOTAL (valid)	15	100.0	100.0	

Results for Task Difficulty Model in the Pre-test

All six questions were examined to measure and collect variables related to task difficulty. The relationships of each of the variables in the proposed model were determined. Finally, these open codes were finalized according to Table 2 regarding the task difficulty. The result shows that mode of doing the task and order of doing the task were the most important factors for task difficulty.
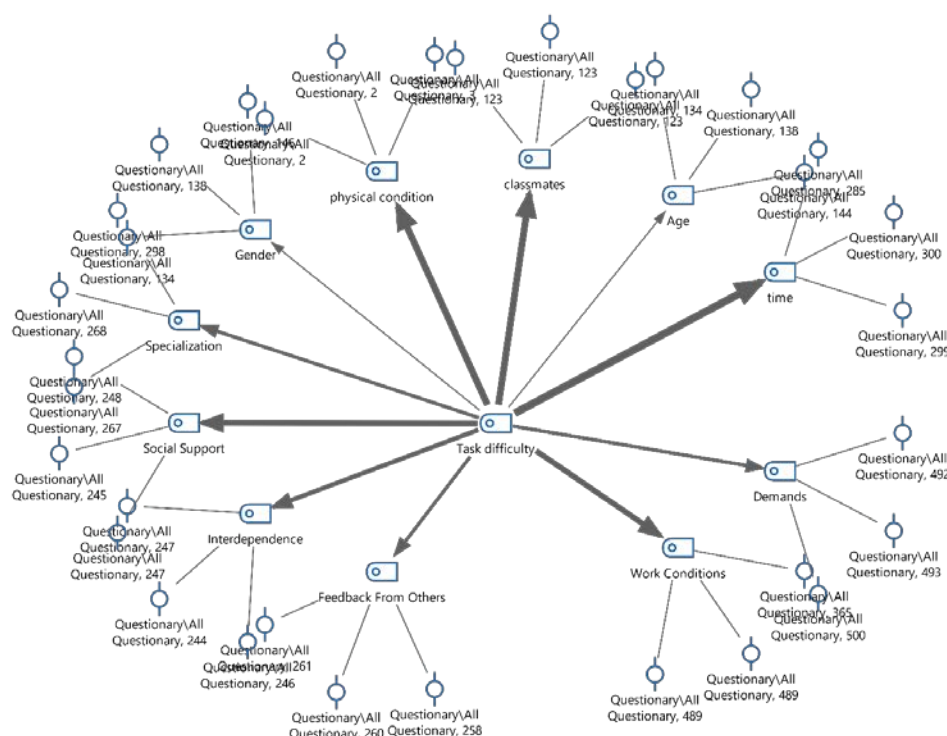
Table 2- Task Difficulty Categories

	Documents	**Percentage**
The mode of doing the task	15	100.00
The order of doing the task	15	100.00
Classmates	14	93.33
Physical Condition	12	80.00
time	11	73.33
Gender	7	46.67
Age	5	33.33
Documents with code(s)	15	100.00
Documents without code(s)	0	0.00
Document analysis	15	100.00
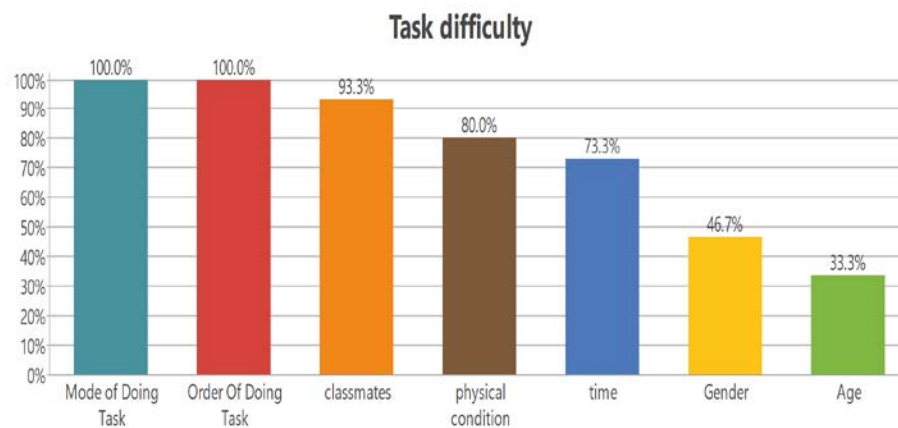
Figure 1. Task Difficulty Categories Histogram

According to the dimensions and components obtained from the results, the output result of MAXQDA2020 software for the task difficulty categories was obtained as follows:

Figure 2. Task Difficulty Categories Model Output

Results for Post-Test Task Difficulty Analysis

After the interview with the EFL learners, the researcher also provided the participants with the post-test qualitative questionnaire, which they already had in the pre-test stage to compare their answers before and after doing the easy and difficult tasks. As it can be observed from the result, from the learners' point of view, classmates, work conditions and time have a great impact on task difficulty. They also opine that gender and age have the least influence on task difficulty.

Selective coding

Given the central coding between the categories and the independent models obtained from the phenomenological stage, the grounded theory was implemented to connect these phenomena and produce the needed theories. In this step, using the selected coding method, the relationships between the phenomena and outline how these categories affect each other is explained. According to these contents, the relations between different parts of the model are presented as follows:
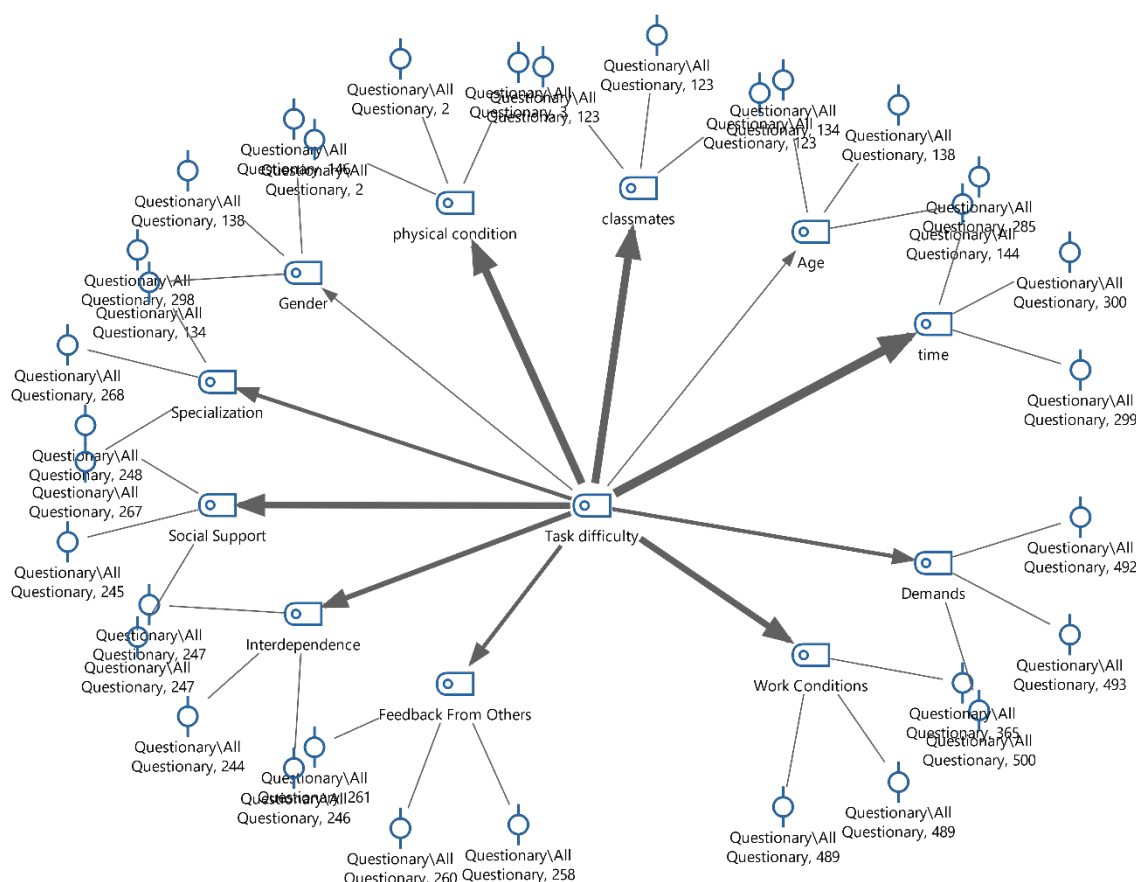
Figure 3. Communicate Between Central Codes in the Quality Section of the Software

As presented in the above model, Correlation relationships have been established between the relevant variables, and even how the relationship between the variables in the model is well presented. However, this regression relationship is based only on the results of qualitative analysis and is based on the abundance and overlap of the texts in the interviews and codes extracted from the same texts.

Categories and central coding of all questionnaires

In this phase, the key points of each questionnaire were identified as the initial open-source code. Then, by reviewing them and converting them to secondary codes, these open codes became concepts related to the research topic. The open codes were obtained from 120 questionnaires with the learners at the Tehran Institute of Technology.

Table 3- The Results of the Coding of Task Difficulty Post-test Questionnaires

	Frequency	Percentage
Classmate	225	32.42
Physical-Condition	157	22.62
time	110	15.85
work condition	58	8.36
demand	58	8.36
feedback from others	25	3.60
Social Support	25	3.60
Specialization	19	2.74
Interdependence	16	2.31
Age	1	0.14
Gender	0	0.00
TOTAL	694	100.00

After the interview with the EFL learners, the researchers also provided the participants with the post-test qualitative questionnaire, which they already had in the pre-test stage to compare their answers before and after doing the easy and difficult tasks. As it can be observed from the results in table 3, classmate, work conditions and time have a great impact on task difficulty. They also opine that gender and age have the least influence on task difficulty. Figures 4 provides the difference between each of the variables.
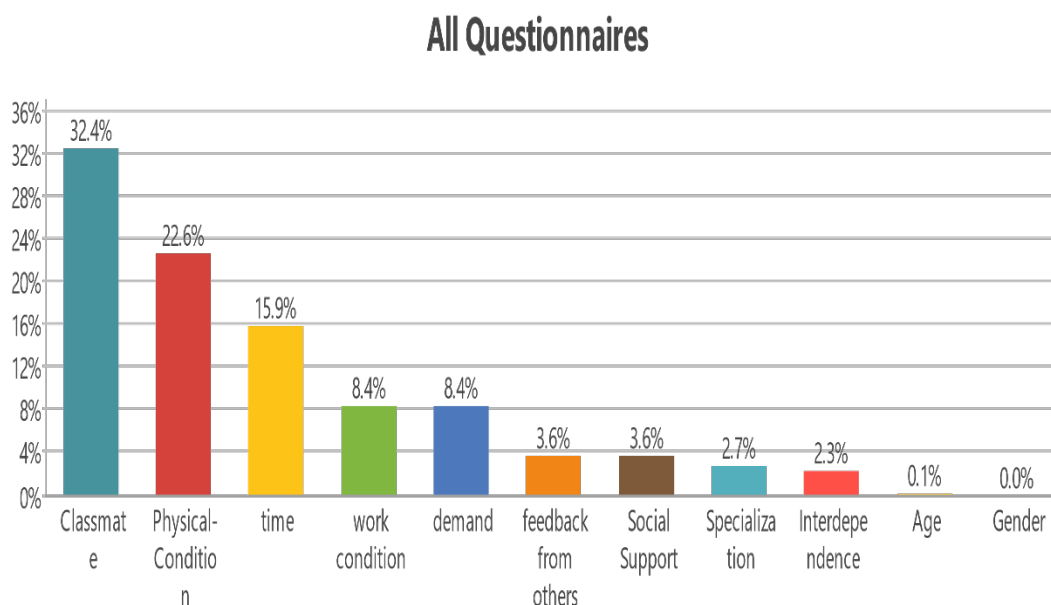
Figure 4. The Figure of the Coding of Task Difficulty Post-Test Questionnaires
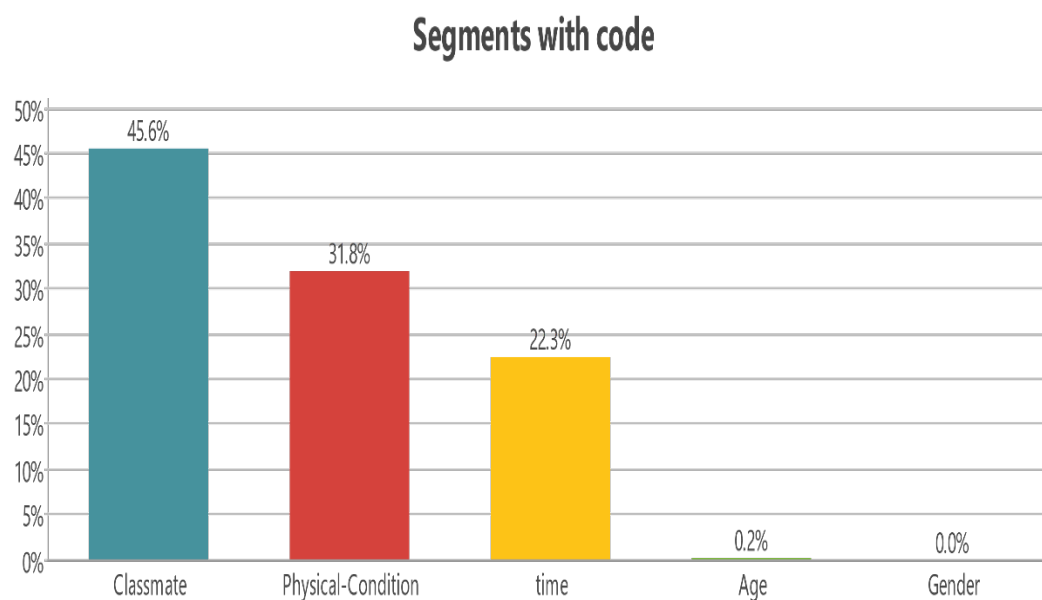
physical condition, classmate, and time

According to the post-test qualitative questionnaire, the question, what physical conditions of the class make a task difficult for you? was asked Preliminary codes were extracted from the answers given to this question. These open codes were finalized according to Table 4, regarding the physical condition, classmate, and time. Based on the qualitative analysis, the open coding performed in the second question, how might classmates make the task difficult for each other? Is it more difficult for learners to do tasks in pairs or groups of 3-4-5? Why? how might Classmates'(age-gender-personality-attitude-confidence-language proficiency) make the task difficult?

Table 4- The Results of the Open Coding Physical Condition, Classmates, and Time

	Frequency	Percentage
Classmate	225	45.64
Physical-Condition	157	31.85
time	110	22.31
Age	1	0.20
Gender	0	0.00
TOTAL	493	100.00

The result was summarized in Table 4 and Fig 5. So, the classmates, physical condition and time were the most important factors in making the task difficult for them. However, age and gender were not the key factors in task difficulty. So, these two items were omitted.

Figure 5. The Figure of Open Coding Physical Condition, Classmates, and Time
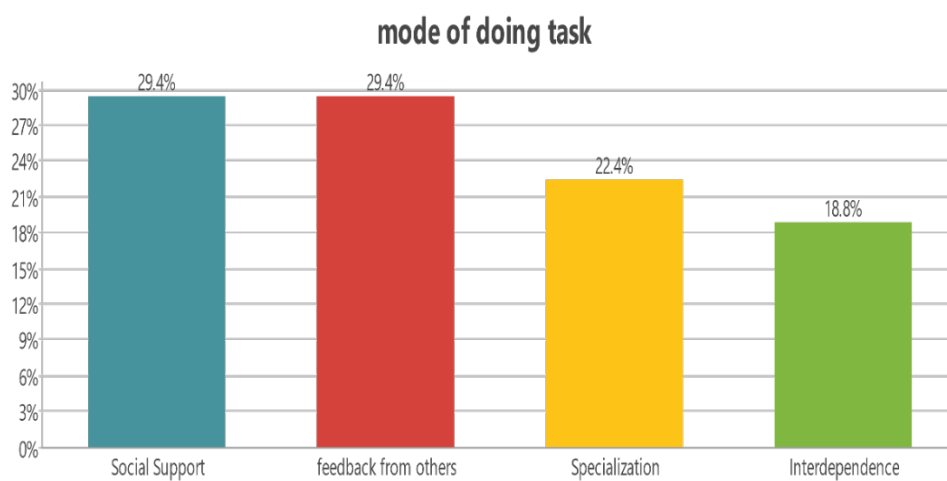
Mode of Doing the Task

According to the question of the qualitative questionnaire, *how can a teacher's mode of task presentation or task instruction make a task difficult*? Preliminary codes were extracted from the answers given to this question.

**Table 5-** The Results of the Open Coding Mode of Doing the Task

	Frequency	Percentage
Social Support	25	29.41
feedback from others	25	29.41
Specialization	19	22.35
Interdependence	16	18.82
TOTAL	85	100.00

These open codes were finalized according to Table 5 and Figure 6 regarding the mode of doing the task. The result shows that lack of social support and feedback from others made the task difficult for the learners with 30 percent influences.

Figure 6. The Figure of the Open Coding Mode of Doing the Task

According to the dimensions and components achieved from Table 5 and Figure 6, the output result of MAXQDA software for the mode of doing the task categories was obtained in Figure 7:
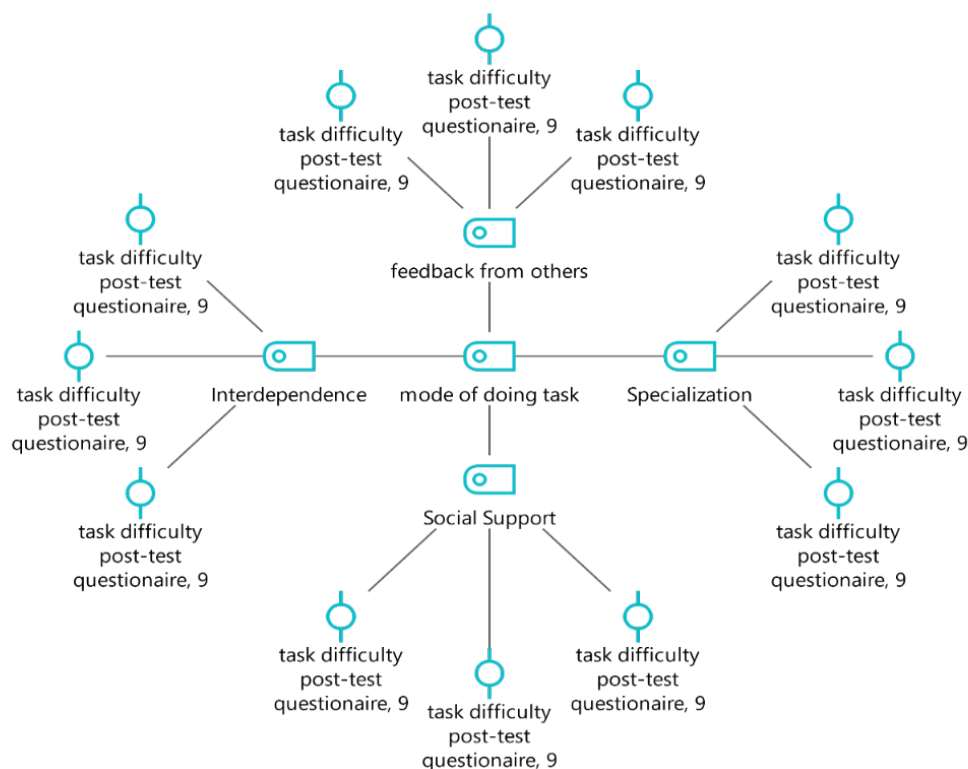
Figure 7. Mode of Doing the Task Categories, Model Output in Post-Test

Order of Doing the Task

According to the question of the qualitative questionnaire in the post-test, *what is the relation between the order of doing the task and its difficulty*? (The first individual, then in groups or vice versa) Preliminary codes were extracted from the answers given to this question.

Table 6. The Results of the Open Coding Order of Doing the Task

|	Frequency	Percentage
demand	58	50.00
work condition	58	50.00
TOTAL	116	100.00

These open codes were finalized according to Table 6 and Figure 8 regarding the order of doing the task. As it can be observed, both demand and work conditions had a similar influence on difficulty.

Figure 8. The Figure of Open Coding Order of Doing the Task

Based on the dimensions and components obtained from the above table and figure, the output result of MAXQDA software for the Order of Doing Task categories was obtained in Figure 9:
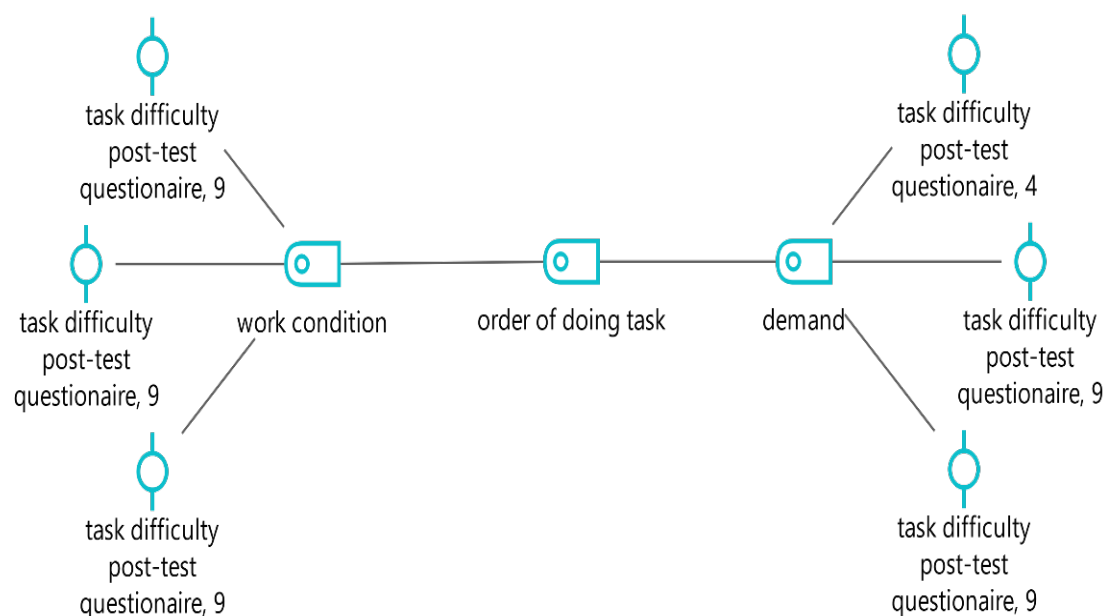
Figure 9. Order of Task Doing Categories Model Output in Post-test

The Final Model of Task Difficulty in post-test

After examination of each of the sub-criteria, the main variable of the study, task difficulty, was examined. All questions in inter views and questionnaires were investigated to measure and collect variables related to task difficulty in the post-test. The relationships of each of the variables in the proposed model were determined. Finally, these open codes were finalized according to Figure 10 regarding the task difficulty. Therefore, the result indicates that classmate, physical condition, time, the order of doing the task, and mode of doing the task were the significant factors in this model of task difficulty.
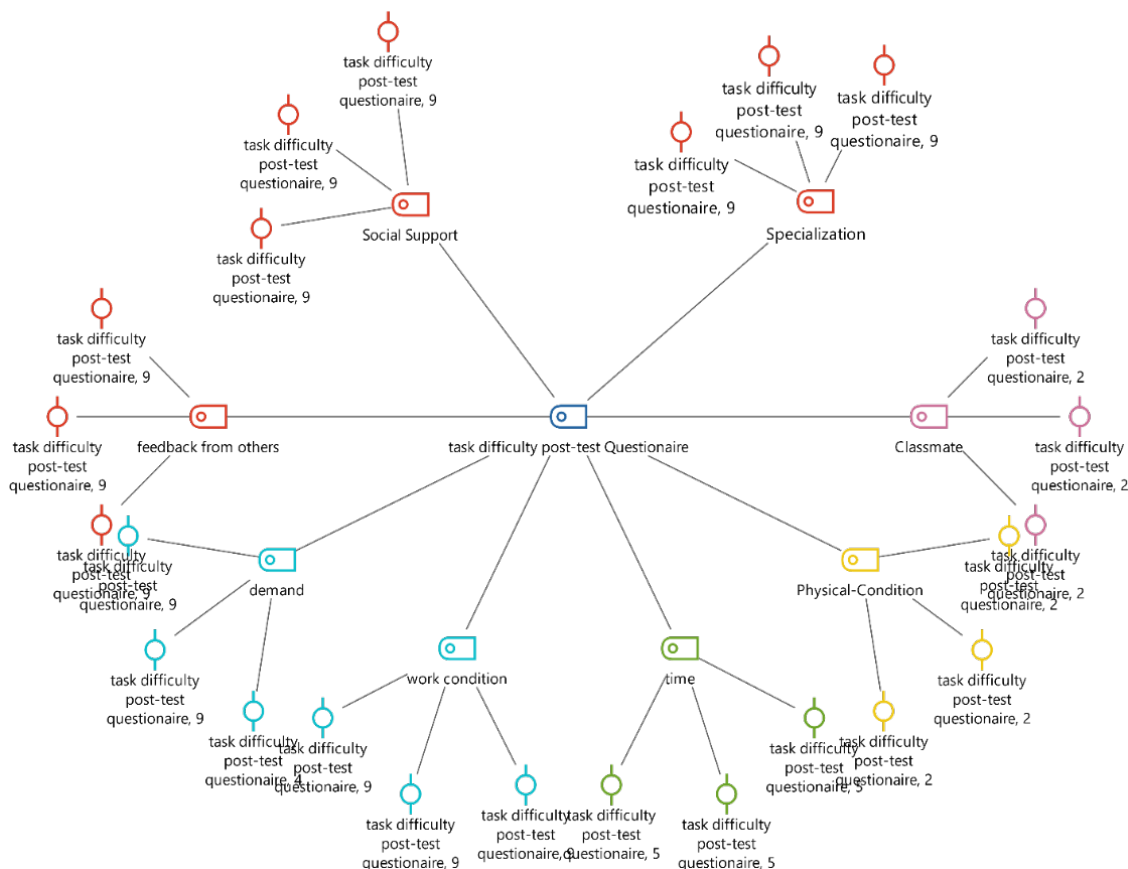
**Figure 10.** The Final Model of Task Difficulty in the Post-test

Results for Autonomy Analysis

Following the distribution of the questionnaire to the EFL learners, the researchers also provided the participants with the post-test qualitative questionnaire, to compare their answers before and after doing the easy and difficult tasks.

Table 7- The Results of the Coding of Autonomy Questionnaires

|	Frequency	Percentage
Decision-Making Autonomy	310	36.82
Work Scheduling Autonomy	296	35.15
Work Methods Autonomy	236	28.03
TOTAL	842	100.00

As it is seen from the result in Table 7, from the point of all learners' views, autonomy is divided into three factors that are illustrated in Table 7 and Figure 11.
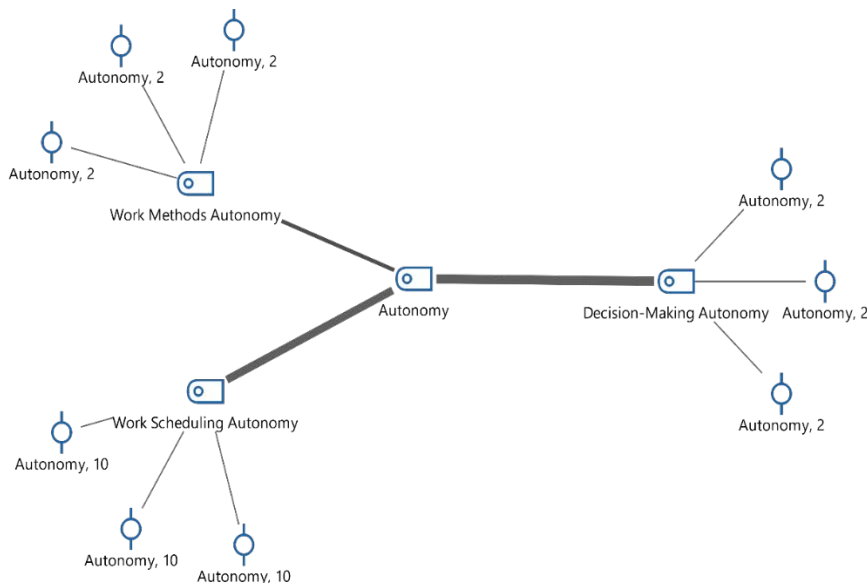
Figure 11. Autonomy Categories Model Output

According to the dimensions and components obtained from the above table and figure including work method and schedule, the final model of the output result of MAXQDA 2020 software for the autonomy categories was obtained in Figure 12.
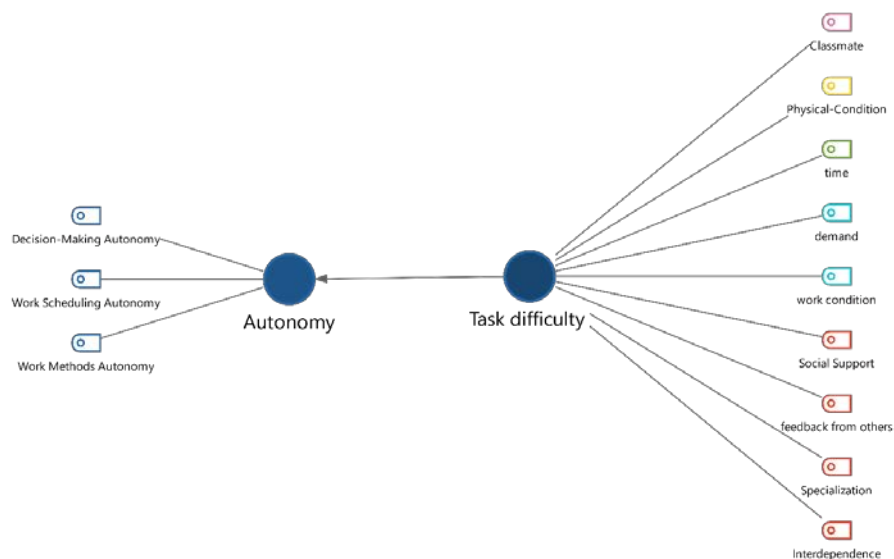
Figure 12. Comprehensive Conceptual Model of the Research

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DISCUSSION

According to the results of the qualitative part of the research, first, a conceptual model was extracted from the qualitative data, and the relationships between them were identified. Then the relationship between the categories was examined and confirmed. The results of this research are aligned with Anton (2003) who believes that using dynamic assessment (DA) procedures makes the placement more accurate because a complete range of abilities is presented. Sternberg and Grigorenko (2002) who applied DA, have mentioned that the human abilities are flexible more than being fixed. According to Ableeva (2008) study, employing DA in reading and listening comprehension classroom makes it possible for both learners and their teachers to identify the probable sources of problems that might hinder comprehension. In Poehner's (2005) study, playing different parts of an English movie to the participants was suggested. This improves their speaking ability, leads questions, hints and suggestions, and creates explicit feedback to construct oral narratives. Antón (2009) concluded that DA brings a deeper understanding of students' abilities. Xiaoxiao and Yan's (2010) project presented a simple framework for English writing instruction based on the principles of DA. Sadeghi and Khanahmadi (2011) studied the possibility of DA used as an instruction in the development of grammar in Iranian EFL learners. All the given references above prove how assessing learners dynamically can help them achieve autonomy with full concentration on learners' abilities and potentials.

Regarding the new calibrated scale for autonomy, this concept was addressed in this research according to relevant previous studies. Thanh Nga (2014) applied a study to investigate the extent to which teachers who were from Vietnam understood the essence of learner autonomy and what they believed about this issue which was implemented in their teaching activities. Gelisli (2017) applied a study to develop a scale named the "Learner Autonomy Scale" (LAS) for determining the learner autonomy of the students toward English lessons. The study revealed that LAS is a valid and reliable tool. Applying LAS with other tools to collect data on learner autonomy will be of advantage. Finally, Arfae and Clark (2017) applied a study to investigate the present status of the promotion of language learner autonomy in Ontario's ESL context. The findings of this study will provide teachers and policy-makers with new insights into learner autonomy. The study presents a thorough understanding of participants' perceptions of the construct of learner autonomy, desirability, feasibility, and challenges of promoting learner autonomy, its contribution to second language learning, and teachers' roles in the context.

Regarding the first research question of this qualitative research that:

" ***In what ways varying task difficulty levels based on the adapted model can change the criteria for assessing learner autonomy?*** "

The finding revealed that the new model of task difficulty caused learners to find more independence and sense of responsibility for learning. It was totally in contrast with the task complexity theories in which making tasks more difficult for the learners' results in more confusion and less interest in class activities cooperation and participation by learners. The results of data analysis were more aligned with theories that perceive language learning tasks either as a collective social activity within which responses and feedback are important or as recursive, nonlinear mental strategies that have effects on students' autonomy and metacognitive knowledge. The calibrated scale for autonomy indicated that mode of doing the task and order of doing the task were the most important factors for task difficulty. The most important criteria for making task difficult were interdependence, demands, work conditions and classmates.

Considering the second research question of this study that:

How does task difficulty and dynamic assessment interact to significantly affect EFL learners' autonomy?

Assessing learners for doing the task needs teachers not to tighten their control too much. Delegating tasks and decisions is another point in the scale of learner autonomy. If learners are to take more responsibility for their learning, they need to have more influence on the learning process. This calls for a reallocation of some tasks and decisions in classroom work, so that students can get more involved for example in choosing learning materials or correcting mistakes. Students are of course not trained teachers and cannot take over any teacher role, but they are surely able to cope with some of the teacher's roles. It is important that the teacher respect the ways they handle these tasks, and expect learners to deal with the consequences of their decisions. So, it is better way to support them but do not rescue them or, in other words, do not be afraid to let them make mistakes. The findings also proved that because learners find more independence in handling their tasks in the class, they can achieve higher confidence in making mistakes and correcting their language learning errors under teachers' supervision. It is important for teachers to respect the ways learners handle these tasks, and expect learners to deal with the consequences of their decisions. So, in dealing with difficult tasks if teachers support learners but do not rescue them or, in other words, do not be afraid to let them make mistakes, then the autonomy in the learning behaviors of the students can be observed explicitly.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, the result of this study revealed that increasing collaboration in the class affects learner attitudes in different ways. It can inspire the learners to depend on each other as well as themselves and not just on the teacher. Group work also provides chances for peers' feedback. Learners are more interested in doing activities to make the group happier than to make the teacher pleased. In addition, pair and group work as it is compared to the whole class work, might help get a higher number of students actively included in completing one task. These are the building components of responsible behaviors from the learners. However, developing the process also needs a certain teacher's perspective. An eagerness to consider learners as partners in reaching common goals, consistency in control, and a willingness to give the responsibility of making decisions for tasks as well as sharing information with their peers are necessary items for getting to this level of autonomy.

Through sharing all the related information with learners, teachers show respect and interest in considering learners as partners in working for the common goal of language learning. This involves being completely clear about short and long-term goals. Informing students about the goals of a specific activity helps them identify with these aims and increases their feeling of more responsibility for the outcome. In addition, continuous control is another criterion that is important to make expectations towards the learner, acceptable behavior limitation, and the results of failing to get to expectations. In short, learners like to play with these rules. But it is necessary not to be strict about the level of control.

Delegating tasks and decisions is another point in the scale of learner autonomy. If learners are more responsible for their learning, they can have more effects on the process of learning. This ends in reallocating some tasks and making some decisions in class work so that students can feel involved, for example in selecting materials for learning or making error corrections. Students are of course not trained teachers and cannot take over any teacher role, but they are surely able to cope with some of the teacher's roles. The teachers need to respect the ways they

manage these tasks and ask learners to manage the results of their decisions. Therefore, it is a more suitable way to support them, but not to rescue them or not to be afraid to make mistakes.

The findings of this study can pave the way for teachers to convert the class from more teacher-centered to more learner-centered through the autonomy power that students have achieved. In addition, this level of autonomy and independence can increase learners' confidence in facing more challenging tasks during the learning process. Another advantage of having autonomous learners is having more dynamic learning as the tasks will be managed by the cooperation between teachers and learners with a higher sense of responsibility for task accomplishments. Finally, working schedule and conditions for language learning could be smoother and easier for both teachers and learners through the autonomous personality that is achieved in the classroom.

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