A Model of Iranian Cultural Identity: A Structural Equation Modelling Approach

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Abstract

This study aimed, firstly, to extract the underlying factors of Iranian cultural identity and, secondly, to confirm the aforementioned factors via Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis. In order to achieve these goals, the researchers reviewed extensive literature on language, culture and identity at both national and international levels. Based on the literature and consultations with a group of 30 language university students and a cadre of experts in the field of sociology, an Iranian Cultural Identity model with six components was hypothesized. In order to test and validate the model, a questionnaire was also developed. To determine the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha was used. The reliability of all the items in the questionnaire was 0.78. To measure the construct validity of the model, Exploratory Factor Analysis using PCA was performed, demonstrating five underlying factors of Iranian Cultural Identity. Then, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis through AMOS 22 was performed to test the model and the interaction among variables. The SEM results confirmed the existence of five factors. Finally, statistical results were discussed and implications were provided.

Keywords: Iranian cultural identity; exploratory factor analysis; structural equation modeling

1. Introduction

The spread of English as a lingua franca has resulted in increasing the number of people who are actually eager to learn it around the world, and Iran is not an exception. Learning any human languages is indubitably connected with their cultural norms and values which normally define an individual's identity. Cultural identity is correspondingly formed when the members of a community constantly follow the same sets of social norms and rules. A variety of factors such as ancestry, social class, educational level, family, language, political opinions and profession might have an observable influence on an individual's cultural identity (Pishghadam & Navari, 2009; Pishghadam & Zahibi, 2012).

But not until the last decades of the 19th century did an interest develop in certain places in parts of the content of language teaching that go beyond literary education as such, and from the 1960s onwards the instruction of cultural issues of a nation began to crystallize out as a more or less independent discipline (Risager, 2007).

Culture Instruction first arose in the national phase of the history of language teaching. Language pedagogy, moreover, has roots that stretch back at least as far as 500 BC (Kelly, 1969). Language pedagogy and culture pedagogy did not, however, have much to do with each other until the 1990s, when it was possible to see signs of a burgeoning awareness of each other's work and perspectives – in some respects also a rapprochement, especially under the banner of "intercultural learning" (Risager, 2007).

1.2. Theoretical Framework

Language and culture interact as they are severely linked to each other. Language transmits cultural elements like beliefs, customs, objects, arts, and techniques and cultural components can be described, analyzed and evaluated by language. Understanding one requires the comprehension of the other. The emergence of these two entities seems rather simultaneous in human history (Kun, 2013).

Gunderson (2000) described language and culture as inextricably linked. According to him, nothing can come from separating them because they have little or no meaning apart from each other. Language learners generally tend to get confused when they encounter the culture of the foreign language. At this moment, they have to recognize and accommodate these new cultural aspects in to their sense of identity and their culture. And this is the point which often leads to uncertainty. In other words, it results in the existence of uncertainty and feeling unsure on the part of the foreign language learners as to where they belong in the community, as they will feel out of place (Gunderson, 2000).

Every person, or group of people, has an identity and a culture. Countries are no exception; every country has created an identity and culture

for themselves. Identity refers to the image that an individual depicts into the rest of the world, and culture is the image which people have of themselves. Although identity refers to the identification and perception of cultural belonging, internal to the individual, culture is conceived as external. Culture is linked with the artifacts and ways of doing which are shared by a group of people whereas identity denotes the recognition, approval and internalization of these artifacts and ways of doing by a member of that group (Nunan & Choi, 2010).

Learning a new language and getting acquainted with its culture have surely multiple bearings on the learners' identity. A person's perception of his or her own and other's identities starts from the moment of birth and is further formed by the values and attitudes prevailing and frequent at home and in the proximate community. Each person learns his or her cultural values through the socialization process and these values affects each individual's performance, actions, and deeds. Consequently, these cultural values guide, shape and have an impact on people's conduct: the way they learn, live and behave. Because of this, culture is deemed to be a chief shaper of individuals' identity (Billikopf, 2009; Pishghadam, 2011).

Identity formation is a complicated process which gradually occurs in a social context. The process of identity construction can also be a complex and multifaceted process (Schecter & Bayley, 1997) as the language learners are under the influence of two cultural systems whose values can be extremely diverse from each other.

Every single person has many social identities and cultural identity is one of those social identities (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1999). Aboud (1981, as cited in Berry, 1999) defined cultural identity as one's attachment to a group or groups who share same cultural values and beliefs. Cultural identity is mainly formed through the socialization process and is further influenced by a number of factors such as race, ethnicity and religion. Clarke (2008, p. 527) also believes that "cultural identity is fluid and contingent in relation to historical and cultural circumstances".

Collier and Thomas (1988) describe cultural identity as an individual's identification with and acceptance into a group that has a shared system of meanings and values. Cultural identity can be further defined, from the psychological perspective, as an individual's awareness of membership in a particular social group (Milville, Koonce, Darlington, & Whitlock, 2000).

Similarly, Rosaldo (1984, as cited in Pishghadam & Sadeghi, 2011) mentions the interrelation between identity, culture, and language and considers them as intimately related constructs in the social setting. Language is considered to be a significant element in shaping an individual's identity (Brown, 2007) and as we are teaching a second/foreign language, we inevitably teach a second/foreign culture, too (Cakir, 2006) which, subsequently, brings about the development of a second identity. Regarding all

these facts, the issue of cultural identity has achieved a significant position in the realm of foreign language teaching and learning.

Cultural identity, as perceived identification, association and connection with a group which imparts communalities in the views, traditions, customs and norms of conduct (Collier & Thomas, 1988), proposes a link between the self and the cultural groups within which the self is defined (Hong, Wan, No, & Chiu, 2007). This might lead to the correspondence between identities and specific cultures. When the boundaries and the limits of these groups are identified, respected and maintained, cultural identities start being established. Identifying and forming bonds with a specific culture influences an individual's conducts and norms of behavior, and the stronger the bonds, the more attentively and thoroughly he or she sticks to its norms (Jetten, Postmes & McAuliffe, 2002).

Cultural identity can be regarded as a conceptual connection between the psychology of a person and the culture which he or she forms relationships with. Cultural identity connotes a sense of belonging to the groups such as family, religious community, and nation (Berry, 1980; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Phinney, 1990; Triandis, 1995).

According to Mitchell and Myles (2004), language learning process is a social process where the language learner is seen as a social being. The language learner's identity is constructed and reconstructed through the processes of engagement with the L2. Different aspects of learning a foreign language may be affected by the principles in the learners' native culture (Hinkel, 1999) which is derived from the society in which he or she lives.

The identification with a certain culture affects and shapes both an individual's views and conducts. The individual might then perceive the world not through the peculiar characteristics of self but through the typical lens of culture (Hogg, 2001, 2003).

2. Literature Review

In this section, we reviewed the related experimental literature focusing on cultural identity. Hofstede's (2001) cultural framework represents a well-validated operationalization of culture based on six cultural dimensions (power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, short-term/long-term orientation, and indulgence/restraint) and Saboori, Pishghadam, Fatemi and Ghonsooli (2015) investigated the association between these dimensions and the three components of Iranian identity. To this end, the Cultural Dimensions Scale (CDS) along with the Cultural Attachment Scale (CAS) were administered to a sample of Iranian university students. Multiple Correspondence Analysis and Multiple Regression Analysis were employed for data analysis. The results revealed a significant relationship between cultural dimensions and the identity components. It was also found that indulgence is the sole predictor of national

identity, whereas Religious Identity has four predictors, namely, power distance, collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and short-term orientation. And, Western Identity is predicted by power distance and individualism.

Kubota and McKay (2009) reported on a critical ethnography of a small Japanese community with a growing number of non–English-speaking immigrants. They investigated how people in the Japanese community view and engage in local linguistic diversity and how this is related to their subjectivities and to their experiences in learning and using English. The data were based on the public report of a community survey on diversity conducted by the city and the interview with three Japanese volunteer leaders who are teachers and learners of English and two Japanese who study Portuguese in order to support the local Brazilian migrant workers. Based on their findings, they highlighted four emergent themes that offered insights into the significance of learning English in a linguistically diverse context.

Pishghadam and Sadeghi (2011) examined the role of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' access to social as well as cultural capital in their home culture attachment, using Bourdieu's theories in the sociology of education as frames of reference. To this end, two questionnaires were administered to a sample of 342 Iranian EFL teachers from more than 25 private language schools in Mashhad, a city in the northeast of Iran. The results demonstrated that though teachers' home culture attachment was not influenced by their total social/cultural capital, access to two components of social/cultural capital, namely, social competence and social solidarity, played a significant role in teachers' home culture attachment. Interestingly, cultural competence, another component, negatively influenced their home culture attachment. The remaining components, literacy and extroversion, did not play any role in their home culture attachment.

Khajavi and Abbasian (2011) aimed to investigate the cultural pattern of English language materials being instructed at schools of Iran to see whether these materials are appropriate in terms of national identity and globalization. Content analysis of textbooks indicated that authors of these textbooks have avoided cultural matters of foreign countries as much as possible. As a result, textbooks are mostly neutral in terms of culture.

Sarani and Ganji Khoosf (2014) investigated the possible relationship between Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' home-culture attachment and its underlying components with their teaching autonomy. To this aim two questionnaires were distributed among 80 male and female EFL teachers in Iran. Gathered data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient. Finally, results of the study revealed that there is no significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' home culture attachment and teaching autonomy. The most important result of this study is bringing about awareness for EFL teachers, EFL learners, EFL syllabus designers, teacher educators and policy makers of the fact that to what extent Iranian EFL

teachers' attachment to their home culture can affect different aspects of their language teaching. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of affective factors especially teaching autonomy on EFL teachers' culture attachment which lightens the way for EFL syllabus designers, teacher trainers and policy makers.

In the case of learning a second language, language learners are not absolutely able to separate themselves from their cultural context where they rely mainly on the knowledge source constructed based on their home society to interpret the meaning of target language linguistic information they are learning (Hinkel, 1999).

According to Shahsavandi, Ghonsooly, and Kamyabi (2010), nowadays, it is becoming more and more crucial for each individual to get to know different languages and cultures of the world. Correspondingly, there are two facets: the learner's home culture, i.e., the native culture of the individual and the second/foreign culture, i.e., the culture of the second/foreign language he or she is learning.

An important issue considering learning a foreign language is the concept of home culture attachment and its impacts on learning any other languages and vice versa. Considering the importance of learning English and its culture in Iran and its impact on identity, introducing a valid model for measuring Iranian cultural identity can be a fruitful endeavor. Therefore, the following research questions were formulated to achieve the goals of the present study.

1. What are the main components of Iranian EFL learners' cultural identity?
2. Is the language identity questionnaire developed in this study a reliable and valid data collection instrument?
3. Does the hypothesized model of language identity for English language learners in Iran show acceptable fit indices?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

This study recruited different numbers of Iranian English language learners from different language proficiency levels, ages, genders and educational backgrounds for its different stages. The respondents to the questionnaire included 50 respondents for the initial piloting and 209 for the reliability, Exploratory Factory Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). A group of 30 undergraduate and postgraduate EFL learners from different universities and a panel of four experts in sociology also commented on the wording of the items, content and construct of the questionnaire developed. The expert members were further conferred for the components of the model hypothesized and tested.

3.2. Procedures

Developing a model and forming a reliable and valid questionnaire to test the model can be regarded as a valuable and beneficial step for doing large-scale surveys. The initial purpose of this study was to determine and define the main components of cultural identity in Iran in order to develop Iranian Cultural Identity Model. That is, the researchers wanted to know what components exactly form the Iranian learners' cultural identity. The hypothesized model was developed after the researchers reviewed the related literature and went through consultations and interviews with a group of learners and experts in the field of sociology. To test the model, a questionnaire was designed and validated through a number of meticulous and scrupulous stages. Then, the data from the questionnaire was fed into the model to test the model fitness. All these stages with their complex statistical procedures are mentioned henceforth.

3.2.1. Questionnaire Development

In order to develop a reliable and valid questionnaire, the researchers ran through the following stages.

Item accumulation and item generation. After reviewing the related literature, the researchers, first, started the process of generating a pool of items based on the hypothesized model. To do so, the researchers utilized content sampling and multi-item scales. The researchers also checked and went over numerous questionnaires in the literature to have a representative sample of the content to be included in the questionnaire.

In order to create the items, the researchers made an attempt to produce simple and short items using natural language away from any loaded and ambiguous words. They also tried to generate more items, in case some of them might be omitted in the pilot study stage. Furthermore, the researchers attempted to avoid double-barreled questions, that is, those questions which ask two or more issues in a single item. The researchers as well tried to avoid to make the questionnaire too long. During the process of item generation, the researchers endeavored to include the same number of positively and negatively worded items as to eschew any bias and, consequently, provided a balanced number of positively and negatively worded items.

Designing the rating scales. A likert-scale design was utilized in this study as the most popular and widely used one. The researchers made use of six options including strongly agree, agree, slightly agree, slightly disagree, disagree and strongly disagree. The researchers used a six-option scale since reviewing the literature on questionnaire development (e.g. Dörnyei 2010; Khatib & Rezaei, 2013) have shown that Iranians tend to act conservatively when they are answering a questionnaire and might mostly select 'no idea: undecided' in some seemingly sensitive items. As a result, six-option type was selected so that the respondents could not hedge. To score the items, 'strongly

agree' received six points, 'agree' five points, 'slightly agree' four points and so on. Scoring was reversed for the negatively worded items.

Designing the personal information part. In this questionnaire, the personal demographic information consisted of information about gender, language proficiency level, education level, and field of study. The personal information section was put at the end of the questionnaire because putting this section at the beginning of the questionnaire might negatively influence the respondents' responses. This part of the questionnaire was designed for the last phase of the main study to investigate Iranian cultural identity a little further and its relation with their demographic information.

Item checking with experts. After creating the questionnaire items in the previous stages, the researchers asked the same panel of 4 experts on sociology to check its intelligibility and accuracy. The panel of experts were requested to rate the items of the questionnaire based on a Likert-type scale from one to four. According to this scale, they commented on the items as 'Not important to be included in the survey', 'Somehow important to be included', 'Important to be included' and finally 'Extremely important to be included in the survey'. These experts were further requested to pen in a final decision on the item by selecting either 'omit' or 'keep' the item as the final decision on each item. The results of the responses obtained from this step reduced the items from 99 to 54 items. Accordingly, 45 items were discarded due to a number of reasons mentioned by the panel including the redundancy, ambiguity, length and irrelevance of the items. As a general rule in this study, items which received more than 70% of acceptability were kept for the next step. The criteria to keep an item or omit it from the questionnaire were based on the panel of experts' opinions.

Item translation and revision. Having gone through the revisions and modification noted by the panel of experts, the researchers translated the items into Persian. This was done for the sake of ease for the participants from different language proficiency levels. Two Persian Literature teachers, both MA in Persian Language and Literature, were asked to edit the Persian version of the questionnaire and make it standard Persian.

Initial piloting and item analysis. The respondents for the pilot study were informed that their information and responses would be kept anonymous so that they would feel comfortable and stress-free to answer to the potentially sensitive items in the questionnaire. The title of the questionnaire, that is, Iranian Cultural Identity Questionnaire, was removed during the administration because it might have influenced the participants' responses. The personal information section, consisting of gender, educational level, language proficiency level, and field of study, was initially generated as open-ended in the pilot questionnaire, but later turned into pre-determined categories to ease later analyses.

At this point, the questionnaire was administered for an initial piloting. The questionnaire included 54 items. Attempts were made to administer the questionnaire to 50 students similar to the target population for which the questionnaire was designed. The feedbacks were very helpful in omitting some of the items and modifying some of the others. Hence, the remaining questionnaire included 27 items.

Reliability index. To measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire in this study, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was employed. According to DeVilles (2003, as cited in Pallant, 2007), 0.7 values are acceptable, but 0.8 and higher values are to be preferred and this value can be different based on the number of respondents and the number of items in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire at this stage consisted of 27 items and was administered to 209 Iranian English language learners. The results for the Cronbach's Alpha showed that the internal consistency of the whole questionnaire was 0.78. Items which seemed to reduce the reliability were intentionally kept intact for the researchers thought that those items were vital and crucial and the fact that an acceptable level of reliability was already met.

Validation. Face validity, content validity and construct validity were investigated as the main types of validity for questionnaire validation in the current study. As response, predictive and concurrent validities were not applicable in this study, they were not investigated.

To ensure the face validity of the questionnaire, the researchers tried to employ a good layout, font type, margin, etc. Successively, the face validity of the questionnaire was met by considering these significant issues and checking them with the previous validated questionnaires in the literature.

In order to establish the content validity of the questionnaire, the researchers asked the panel of experts on sociology, as discussed above, to judge how far the items were representative of an Iranian cultural identity questionnaire. Following the experts' comments on the wording and the interpretation of the items, the researchers implemented some changes. These two kinds of validity, that is, face and content validity, were investigated prior to the reliability phase. Table 1 below indicates the six components in the questionnaire and their related items and reliability indices.

Table 1
The Six Components in the Questionnaire and their Related Items and Reliability Indices

1	Nationality	1	Q1: It's always interesting for me to go to Iranian historical places.	0.829
		2	Q2: I like local Iranian clothes. Q2	
		3	Q3: Iran has a very old and original culture and civilization.	
		4	Q8: I think Iranian culture is richer than western culture.	
2	Religion	5	Q11: The basic goals of human life should have a religious basis.	0.899
		6	Q13: Human society needs religious education.	
		7	Q14: Religious laws and ordinances are consistent with human nature.	
		8	Q17: I enjoy attending religious ceremonies.	
		9	Q18: My general attitude to life is based on my religious beliefs.	
3	Art	10	Q19: I enjoy watching Iranian arts and craft.	0.846
		11	Q20: Persian films are full of interesting and informative concepts.	
		12	Q22: Watching Iranian films is dull for me.	
		13	Q23: I enjoy following the works of Iranian artists.	
		14	Q24: Iranian films are much more informative than western films.	
		15	Q27: I enjoy the Iranian architecture.	
4	Persian Language & Literature	16	Q28: I think Persian literature is much richer than western literature.	0.794
		17	Q29: I love Persian much more than English.	
		18	Q33: In my opinion, English is more beautiful and sweeter than Persian.	
		19	Q36: I like reading poems from Iranian poets.	
5	Media	20	Q37: The media (the Internet, TV, newspaper, etc.) are an important part of my life.	0.896
		21	Q39: I use Internet services like email, chat, search engines, etc.	
		22	Q40: I spend a lot of my free time on social networks such as Telegram, Instagram, etc.	
		23	Q43: At night, I usually watch TV series on domestic / satellite TVs.	
6	Globalization	24	Q46: I enjoy chatting with and encountering people from other cultures.	0.974
		25	Q47: I'm not afraid of living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me.	
		26	Q48: I am certain that I can live in a different and new culture.	
		27	Q54: The country's social, economic, political and … situation is positively affected by the process of globalization.	

To investigate the construct validity, two procedures were employed. During the first stage, the questionnaire was checked for its congruency with

the theories in the literature regarding cultural identity. The aim of this stage was achieved by iteratively checking the items with the researchers in the literature. During the second stage, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were used to statistically check the validity.

It needs to be mentioned that a set of criteria must be met before running factor analysis. The first step in factor analysis is to assess the suitability of the data for factor analysis. According to Pallant (2007, p. 180), two criteria must be met to settle the suitability of the data for factor analysis; 'sample size and the strength of association among the variables (or items)'. Regarding the sample size, the most conventional view says the larger the better. In this study, the criterion was that of five to ten respondents for each item in the questionnaire. Two hundred and nine participants who took part in the exploratory factor analysis phase met this criterion.

The second criterion which is necessary to run factor analysis is related to the inter-correlations among the items in the questionnaire. Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure determine this criterion. In order for these two options to indicate factorability for the data, Bartlett's test of sphericity should be significant, that is, $p<0.05$ and KMO index that ranges from 0 to 1 should not be below 0.6; otherwise, the data will not be considered appropriate for running factor analysis. For the current study as shown in Table 2, the KMO and Bartlett's test results showed that KMO measure was above 0.60 (KMO=0.675) and also the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (p=0.00). These two values assume that there are some significant factors to be extracted from the data.

Table 2

KMO and Bartlett's test results

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		*.675*
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	8998.335
	df	351
	Sig.	.000

Determining the factorability of the data, the researchers chose Principle Components Analysis (PCA) in order to run factor analysis. To decide about the number of factors to be preserved, the Kaiser's criterion according to which only the eigenvalues of 1.0 and more were selected. For the current questionnaire, the scree plot in Figure 1 indicates 8 factors above eigenvalue 1. The eight factors accounted for 89.87% of the total variance (usually anything over 60% is good in this case). These eight factors accounted for 14.77%, 14.62%, 14.31%, 12.77%, 11.86%, 8.16%, 7.92, and 5.44% of the total variance, respectively.
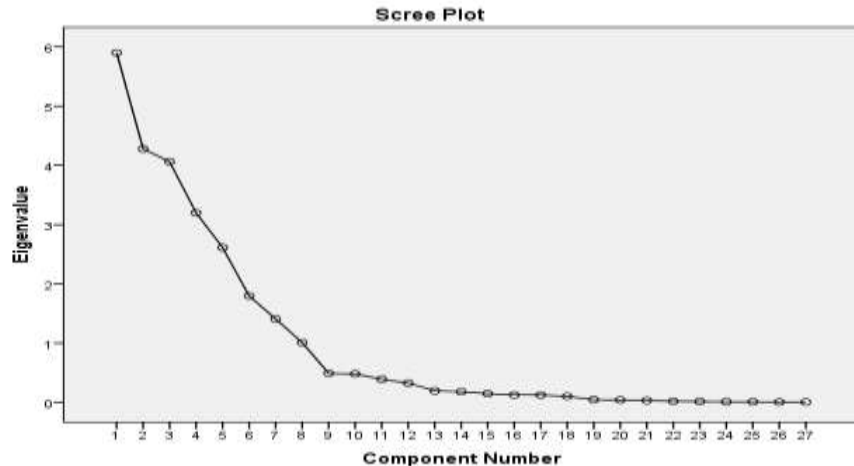
Figure 1. Scree plot

Variable communalities were greater than 0.30 for all the items. Communality values for this questionnaire ranged from 0.71 to 0.98.

The results of factor analysis based on PCA, as shown in Table 3, indicate that a five-factor solution might provide a more suitable grouping of the items in the questionnaire. Some cross-loadings were also observed. Items 2, 3, and 8 which were from the first factor, i.e., nationality, were loaded on the second factor, i.e., religion, making the researchers rename the factor as "Nationality and Religion". Items 19 and 27 were also loaded here as they both contained concepts related to nationality. Some of the other cross-loadings were neglected because they were usually loaded way higher on another factor. After checking the factor loadings, items that do not load highly on any of the factors were to be eliminated from the questionnaire. In this phase of questionnaire administration, question 1 and 43 were deleted as both were malfunctioning.

Table 3
Factor Loading Based on PCA

Component Matrix[a]								
	Component							
1	636					470		
11			605					
13			513					
14			568					
17			518					
18			495					
19			673					
2			438					
20				692				
22				692				
23				695				
24				682				
27			504					
28							519	
29							534	
3			514					
33							538	
36							474	
37						456		
39						474		
40						472		
43	667							
46		802						
47		804						
48		790						
54		752						
8			487					
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.								
a. 8 components extracted.								

Confirmatory factor analysis and testing the model fitness. After doing exploratory factor analysis, the researchers decided to run a confirmatory factor analysis to check if the questionnaire data fit the model hypothesized at the outset of the study. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), a multivariate analysis technique for exploring causality in models and the causal relations among variables, was run. SEM is rooted in the positivist epistemological belief that was cobbled together out of regression analysis, path analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. SEM is normally used as a confirmatory technique to test models that are conceptually derived a priori or test if a theory fits the data. SEM shows the relationship between latent variables, that is, the components of Iranian cultural identity in this study, and the observable variables, that is, the items in the questionnaire generated for each of the components in Iranian cultural identity construct (Khatib & Rezaei, 2013).

In order to test the hypothesized model, AMOS 22 was run and maximum likelihood method was used to estimate the parameters. The participants who took part in this part of the study were the same 209 English language learners.

In order to report the model fitness, there are three common absolute fit indices including:

- x^2 according to which nonsignificant x^2 ($p > 0.05$) indicates good fit;

- Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA); acceptable fit < 0.10 and good fit < 0.05; hence the smaller the RMSEA, the better and fitter the model is; and

- The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) > 0.90 is considered as good fit.

In this study, absolute fit indices were taken into account because there was no previous model to test this model against. The initial results of SEM showed poor fitness for the model. Hence, some changes were made in the model to make it fit the data. These changes included removing some of the items like questions 2, 3, 8, 19, 27 (all from the first factor, i.e., nationality and religion), 33, 36 (from language and literature) and 43 (from media) because they showed low factor loadings. The omission of items 2,3,8, 19, and 27 made the researchers rename the first factor as "Religion". Hence, the model was revised and SEM was once again run. The output of the second SEM showed x^2 = 448.5, df = 126, p = 0.00, which shows a significant value for Chi-square. Since Chi-square value is dependent on sample size, x^2/df is used as a solution, which is 448.5/126 = 3.55 and is considered as an acceptable degree. Although there is no consensus regarding an acceptable ratio for this statistic, recommendations range from as high as 5.0 (Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin & Summers, 1977) to as low as 2.0 (Tabachnick & Idell, 2007). The results of the second SEM also indicated CFI=0.946 and RMSEA= 0.076, which were also acceptable. An RMSEA range between 0.08 to 0.10 provides

a mediocre fit and below 0.08 shows a good fit (MacCallum, Browne, & Ugawara, 1996). The values for CFI range between 0.0 and 1.0 with values closer to 1.0 indicating good fit. However, recent studies have shown that a value greater than 0.90 is needed as indicative of good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The indices for SEM showed a desirable level of fitness based on the output from AMOS 22. Hence, all the indices were at an acceptable level and the model seems to be a fit model. In other words, the data gathered in this study seemed to support this model.

Figure 2 shows the schematic representation of the recursive model of Iranian cultural identity. Path coefficients are also put on the pathways from each latent variable to other latent or observable variables to show the strength of relation or correlation among the variables.
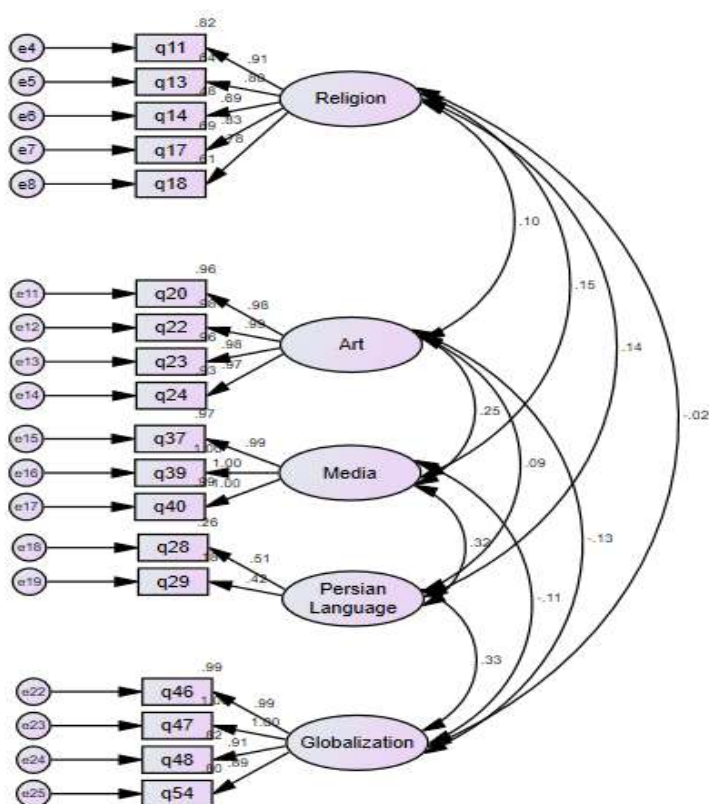

Figure 2. Final model of Iranian cultural identity for EFL learners

4. Results

4.1. A Tentative Model of Iranian Cultural Identity

Cultural identity can be regarded as a conceptual connection between the psychology of a person and the culture which he or she forms relationships with. Cultural identity connotes a sense of belonging to the groups such as

family, religious community, and nation (Berry, 1980; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Phinney, 1990; Triandis, 1995).

During the last two centuries, the pendulum of the Iranian identity has moved back and forth between Persian, Islamic, and modern cultural aspects, and these diverse components of Iranian identity have always been given relative distinctive weight (Zahed, 2004).

Therefore, such a multi-faucet concept of Iranian cultural identity has triggered much dispute among modern Iranian intellectuals (Ashraf, 1993; Haghighat, 2012; Mozaffari, 2014; Saleh, 2012).

Having reviewed the literature, the researchers found a number of components which encapsulated Iranian cultural identity. Interviews with 30 university students, majoring in English, and a cadre of experts on Sociology were conducted to ensure the representativeness and suitability of these constituents. The interviews with the participants were held in Persian. The content of the interviews revolved around the components of cultural identity in Iran. The interviewees responded to the single question of "What constitutes Iranian cultural identity?" and their responses were written down. At the end of the interviews, a comparison was made among the components they proposed and the ones the researchers had picked out a priori.

Six main components for Iranian cultural identity were re-identified and organized. The components were *nationality, religion, Persian language and literature, art, media, and globalization.* Table 4 below shows the definition for each of the identified components of Iranian cultural identity.

Table 4
The Hyposized Model with Its Components and Definitions

Component	Definition
1 Nationality	This component refers to the status of belonging to a particular nation, in this case, Iran, and usually having and following the same national (Iranian) customs and practices
2 Religion	This component denotes Iranians' belief in and worship of God, following Islamic rules and Rituals.
3 Art	This component copes with Iranians' appreciation of a range of human activities in creating visual, auditory or performing artifacts.
4 Persian language and literature	It deals with Iranians' interest toward their language and its literature and how much information they have about their own language, its history and literature.
5 Media	It signifies Iranians' approach toward and their interest in the use of national media used to store and deliver information or data.
6 Globalization	This component states Iranians' attitudes toward the trend of increasing interaction between people on a worldwide scale due to advances in transportation and communication technology

Consequently, the researchers in this study made an endeavor to develop a model for Iranian cultural identity to embrace its relevant constituents. To achieve this goal, the researchers reviewed the literature and relevant theories to establish the theoretical framework for this study.

5. Discussion

There have been three types of identity which received special significance in Iranian context. These three kinds of identity, namely, national, religious, and western identities, are of great importance as they form the Iranian identity components (Karimifard, 2012). Thus, the components of Iranian identity originate from three major cultural realms: Persian, Islamic, and Western (Haghighat, 2012; Shahramnia & Tadayon, 2012; Zahed, 2004).

The first constituent of Iranian cultural identity, i.e., National Identity, originated from ancient Iran. The first entirely native dynasty, ruling Iran, the Samanid dynasty, along with the ancient Persian Empire, dating back to 2500 years ago, are conceived to be the primary formers of Iranian national identity.

The second element which forms Iranian cultural identity stemmed from the Muslim conquest in the mid-7th century. It was during the Safavid era which Shiite Islam has become the formal religion of Iran. Since then, Islamic identity has played a major role in Iranian identity.

Furthermore, people in Iran regard Persian language and its literature as a momentous and substantial part of national identity. Thus, the theories and studies on language and identity (e.g. Block, 2007; Khatib & Rezaei, 2013; Norton, 2000) were consulted as influential on cultural identity.

Art reflects as much about identity as it does about the expression of sights, music, fashion, films and designs. We negotiate our own identity through the channel of the art we utilize, the music we listen to, the kind of art we admire, the way we decorate our houses and offices, the films we watch all are precise reflection of who we are. They are what exactly conveys our identity (Stainton, 2001).

Media (e.g. television, radio, print, digital communication, advertising and social media) are a core component of young people's lives. They have formed a significant force accelerating and speeding up the development of society in the last two decades. These means of communication have been regarded as influential on people's identity (Thamas, Briggs, Hart & Kerrigan, 2017)

Modern (Western) Identity, the third influential factor, was derived from the encounter with the West and modernity. The most significant factor, paving the way for Iranians to become familiar with modernity was the Constitutional movement at the turn of the twentieth century. Moreover, during the history, the phenomenon of globalization has been making the world smaller and the nations closer to one another through the exchange of goods, products, information, jobs, knowledge and culture. Globalization and its

impact on language learning issues (e.g. Coupland, 2010; Graddol, 1997) were also taken into consideration in this study.

6. Conclusions and Implications

The significance of culture and identity as a social/cultural matter in ELT context can become evident by having a glance at the immense proliferation of publications in these areas through the release of hundreds of books and articles (e.g., Atkinson, 1999; Castells, 2004; Giddens, 1991; Hall and Cheston, 2002; Jenkins, 1996; Robertson, 1992).

This study aimed to develop a model and test its fitness through a validated questionnaire. Hence, a model was initially hypothesized and later tested through a valid questionnaire. The results of this study showed, despite being the first model developed for the Iranian context, it enjoyed a reasonable degree of reliability and validity as confirmed by the statistical indices from SEM. The questionnaire also displayed a respectable degree of reliability and validity for future use in the Iranian context. Both the model and the questionnaire developed and validated in this study can have many uses and applications for future researchers.

Firstly, though the model and the questionnaire are both designed and validated for the Iranian context, judicious and thoughtful changes can make them useful for other contexts, too. Steps utilized in this study in order to develop and validate the model and the questionnaire can be used by researchers from other linguistic contexts to develop and validate similar models and questionnaires for other linguistic contexts. However, it seems an urgent issue for the researchers to take contextual variances into account and test the model and the questionnaire for their reliability and validity. In spite of the statistical confirmation for the reliability and validity of the model and the questionnaire and the fact that the data gathered in this study through a reliable and valid questionnaire seem to have fit the model, this would not make this model vaccinated for any other deficiencies and shortcomings. The researchers suggest collecting data from different groups of Iranians so as to decrease confounding variables and, as a result, enhance the reliability and validity of this model.

Furthermore, developing a cultural identity model facilitates more quantitative approaches toward identity research and offers undeniable benefits such as rapid data collection and objective scoring over other methodological tools for identity research. One of the main benefits of developing such a questionnaire is its speed of data collection, objective scoring, and ease of data extrapolation. Therefore, the model and the questionnaire are regarded as good means to further explore cultural identity in Iran.

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