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## Development of a Validated Model for English Learners' Cultural Identity: Using their Perceptions and Attitudes

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### Abstract

Knowing a language and communicating with the speakers of that language requires learning about the culture of the native speakers of that language. The aim of this study was to develop a validated model of cultural identity among Iranian English learners. Initially, it was attempted to determine different factors of cultural identity based on the learners' perceptions of cultural identity to develop a model. Thus, 20 EFL learners studying at Safir English language institute in Tehran, Iran were interviewed about their cultural identity and their attitudes were recorded. Considering the qualitative phase, a close inspection of the responses of these learners in the interviews and going through three stages of open, axial and selective coding, four factors including "religion, culture, nationality, and language" were extracted. After that, a questionnaire indicating factors of cultural identity was constructed. In the quantitative phase, the questionnaire went through an exploratory factor analysis for the sake of validity and after a pilot study with 183 learners, 384 EFL learners filled it out. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis was also run through LISREL 8.8. to confirm that the proposed model enjoyed validity for future research by running a confirmatory factor analysis and the model of cultural identity was developed. The findings of this study can make English teachers and materials developers aware of these important findings to be prepared to help learners with possible challenges in English classes.

**Keywords:** Iranian EFL learners, personality types, CF, class discussion

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### INTRODUCTION

Culture is the characteristics of a specific group of people who share similar customs, social habits, and language. According to Brown (2007), a culture is a group of beliefs, values, and skills setting a group of people apart from other groups. As Hinkel (1999) asserts, culture refers to the ways of thinking, believing, and behaving which form social constructs and evolve within a group and then via the socialization process are transferred to other group members (cited in Jamalvandi, 2013). Culture is defined as a complex whole which reflects person's identity indeed. Cultural identity is described as people's nature and nurture.

According to Edwards (2009, p. 2), "identity is at the heart of the person, and the group, and the connective tissue that links them. People need a sense of belonging and language can bring such a sense of belonging". Some scholars believe that language is a marker of identity or it is only a surface feature of identity (Edwards, 2009; May, 2008). Globalization has also caused nations from different countries to get exposed to each other through social media which entails getting familiar with their cultures as they communicate by the English language.

Many researchers maintain that cultural identity is an important asset for psychological adaptation (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001). Ritlyova (2009) also asserts

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that it is possible to improve Second Language (L2) learners' perception of a second language culture along with their own culture through raising learners' awareness of an L2. Clearly, the relationship between language and culture is complex. Englebert (2004) asserts that an L2 instruction entails teaching a foreign culture since in EFL classes, as we teach the language, we automatically teach the culture. According to Tavares and Cavalcanti (1996), the instruction of culture is essentially aimed at raising learners' awareness as well as increasing their curiosity towards the L2 culture. If learners are to communicate with individuals from other cultural backgrounds, they will need not only to understand the cultural influences in others' behaviors, but also to recognize the profound influence of patterns of their own culture. Therefore, teaching the target culture has to serve the development of cross-cultural communication.

The emphasis on culture learning in EFL classrooms is obvious in different studies. Nunan and Choi (2010) state that all individuals grapple with issues of how language and culture impact their identity. Alptekin (2006) proved that learners' cultural awareness impacts their language learning. As Ahmadi (2010) maintains language and the construct of identity are interwoven. Razmjoo and Izadpanah (2012) carried out a study and found that identity processing style makes important contribution to L2 literacy-related proficiency. A slight positive relationship was also observed between the informational processing style, L2 literacy, and L2 writing. In another study conducted by Razmjoo and Mavaddat (2015), it was sought to examine how justice judgments, outcomes, and identity orientations are related. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between procedural justice and rule compliance. Moreover, there was a significant correlation between distributive justice and outcome satisfaction. Based on the developed structural equation model, justice judgments were found to only directly impact the outcomes. Finally, identity did not have any mediating impact on the causal relationship between the two. Spender (2011) tried to explore the relationship be-

tween acculturation and language learning during a year-long study abroad program. The researcher presented the experiences of four U.S. American sojourners to Sweden as case studies. The results indicated that higher levels of acculturation are associated with higher levels of proficiency, while a rejection of the host culture is associated with lower levels of proficiency. Norrizan (1993) also conducted a study to examine the effect of various cultural components in ESL texts in Malaysia. She used a combined cultural unit which is comprised of culturally suggestive topics such as forms of the houses, studying abroad, salary, financial loans, etc. She concluded that the textbooks were inclined towards middle-class values and lifestyles with meaningful interactions among the learners in these classrooms. She recommended that teachers should take a more selective approach in selecting appropriate items by taking account of the learners' culture. Therefore, EFL classrooms are the places to teach and learn culture as well as language. In fact, learning an L2 is "not simply learning new information (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, etc.) which is part of [one's] own culture but rather acquiring symbolic elements of a different ethno linguistic community" (Gardner, 2001, p. 17). Several scholars have recently started proposing a model to make their issues more tangible and generalizable in a particular context. For instance, Samimi & Sahragard (2018) attempted to propose a model of reading strategy using SEM for ELT students and the results substantiated the initial structure of the reading questionnaire as the validated model.

As Arikan (2011, p.232) states: Atkinson's (1999) thorough analysis revealed that research on culture received minimal consideration in literature. The focus of the present study was cultural identity as some refer to national identity (Sussman, 2000) or to put it more simply, the way people identify themselves as Iranians and the way they feel about their identity. Accordingly, more research is needed to find out how general cultural identity of Iranian language learners is associated with foreign language learning. Furthermore, these studies and their present-

ed models are specific to the population under the study and the findings may not be generalizable to other contexts.

Thus, more research is needed to be conducted especially in Iranian context on cultural identity and also on the way general cultural identity is connected with foreign language learning. As a result, the current study is invaluable in terms of filling the gap in the current literature and its contribution to the literature on language, culture, and identity and accordingly, new strategic plans are thought of for preserving the essential features of Iranian identity in EFL classes. The findings of this study would pave the way for more in depth analysis of cultural identity and the way it facilitates or hinders foreign language learning in Iranian context. Presenting an Iranian model of cultural identity for advanced EFL learners can make the process of language learning more understandable for language teachers in Iran. Based on the above arguments, it can be put forward that first, studies on cultural identity and foreign language learning may not have direct contribution to Iranian context of foreign language learning and second, previous studies mainly dealt with particular aspects of identity and foreign language learning, which could not show how general cultural identity of Iranian language learners contributed to foreign language learning.

### Research Questions

According to the aim of the study, the following research questions were formulated to cover the scope of this study:

1. *What are the perceptions of Iranian advanced EFL learners toward cultural identity?*
2. *What validated model can be formulated to explain cultural identity among Iranian advanced EFL learners?*

### METHODS

A mixed method design was used in this study to develop a model of cultural identity based on the learners' perceptions towards their cultural identity.

### The Qualitative Phase

#### Participants of Qualitative Phase

The first group of participants consisted of 20 EFL learners (10 males and 10 females) studying in Safir English Language Institute at Tehran, Iran. These EFL learners were studying at advanced level and their age range was eighteen to thirty five. The sampling method was purposive which is widely used in qualitative research. This sampling method requires researchers to have prior knowledge about the purpose of their studies so that they can properly choose and approach eligible participants. They use purposive sampling when they want to access a particular subset of individuals.

#### Instrument of Qualitative Phase

To elicit the various factors of cultural identity for designing the cultural identity questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were designed and conducted with the participants to satisfy the requirements of the qualitative phase of the study. To prepare the questions, the researchers examined the literature on the concept of cultural identity to grasp a general knowledge and gradually came up with an interview guide which led to the designing of six open-ended questions.

#### Data Collection Procedure

After the researchers prepared the final version of the interview questions, the next phase was to hold a three-session interview in the institute. At the beginning of each interview session, the interviewer assured the participants that their personal information would be kept confidential and let them know that their voices were recorded for future analysis. The interview sessions usually lasted ten to fifteen minutes. Afterwards, a copy of the transcribed answers was returned to the participants and they were asked to go through them and make the necessary changes to confirm that the data would reflect their accurate viewpoints. This process is a way of checking the validity of the data known as member checking or participant feedback (Ary, Jacobs, Irvine, & Walker, 2013).

### Data Analysis Procedure

In the data analysis process of the qualitative research, the researchers transcribed the audio-taped interviews genuinely. The transcripts were imported to a computer software called MAXQDA (Kuckartz, 2007). Each imported transcript was assigned a label. When the datasets were organized, it was time for coding and reducing the data which consists of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. As a result, four themes which comprised the model of cultural identity were extracted.

### The Quantitative Phase

As a result of the data analysis in the qualitative phase, the most significant factors of Iranian EFL learners' cultural identity were extracted and then a questionnaire representing all these factors was constructed. Obviously, this researcher-constructed questionnaire consisting of 30 items needed to be piloted and validated before being assigned to the target population, and a total number of 183 EFL learners was considered for pilot study. Cronbach's alpha index was used to check the reliability of the

questionnaire. As it is displayed in table 1, the Cronbach's alpha index is above 0.7 which shows that the questionnaire gained the required reliability value. As a result, no modification was necessary for the items.

**Table 1**  
*Cronbach's Alpha of Questionnaire through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)*

Items	No.	Cronbach's alpha
The Whole Questionnaire	30	0.961

To check the validity of the cultural identity questionnaire, exploratory factor analysis was applied by running SPSS 22. The factorability of the data, as Pallant (2007) suggests, can be checked through two statistical tests of Bartlett's test which should be significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy minimum of which should be 0.6. The indexes of these two tests for the present study are presented in table 2.

**Table 2**  
*KMO and Bartlett's Test*

Variable	Number of Questions	Bartlett's Test Sig.	KMO
Cultural identity(first draft)	1-30	0.000	0.933
Cultural identity(final draft)	1-27	0.000	0.938

As it is evident, KMO and the significance of the Bartlett's test for this instrument are acceptable. The former is greater than 0.6 and the latter is less than 0.5 (Sig. = 0.000). These findings supported the suitability

of the data in the questionnaire. Another step is factor extraction. An efficient way of extracting factors is checking the amount of items of the questionnaire shared before/after factorability.

**Table 3**  
*The Amount of Items of the Questionnaire Shared Before/After Factorability*

Items of the Questionnaire	The Amount Shared Before Factorability	The Amount Shared After Factorability
No. 1	1	0.982
No. 2	1	0.985
No. 3	1	0.47
No. 4	1	0.965
No. 5	1	0.884
No. 6	1	0.976
No. 7	1	0.464
No. 8	1	0.983
No. 9	1	0.963
No. 10	1	0.972
No. 11	1	0.943
No. 12	1	0.969
No. 13	1	0.972
No. 14	1	0.97
No. 15	1	0.972
No. 16	1	0.947
No. 17	1	0.961
No. 18	1	0.981
No. 19	1	0.934
No. 20	1	0.961
No. 21	1	0.963
No. 22	1	0.98
No. 23	1	0.939
No. 24	1	0.967
No. 25	1	0.972
No. 26	1	0.966
No. 27	1	0.976
No. 28	1	0.282
No. 29	1	0.967
No. 30	1	0.971

As it's clear in table 3, three (items; 3, 7, & 28) out of 30 items had the least shared amount; less than 0.5, that needed to be omitted due to failing to achieve the necessary requirement. Therefore,

the questionnaire containing 27 items could be classified based on the four extracted factors; religion, culture, nationality, and language, as indicated in the following table.

**Table 4**  
*The Main Factors of the Questionnaire*

Items of the Questionnaire	Factors	Number of Items
No. 1	Religion	6
No. 2		
No. 4		
No. 5		
No. 6		
No. 8		
No. 9	Culture	8
No. 10		

No. 11		
No. 12		
No. 13		
No. 14		
No. 15		
No. 16		
No. 17		
No. 18		
No. 19		
No. 20	Nationality	7
No. 21		
No. 22		
No. 23		
No. 24		
No. 25		
No. 26		
No. 27	Language	6
No. 29		
No. 30		

As a result, 27 items were subjected to principal component analysis. Pallant (2007) suggested three methods to check the suitable number of factors to retain. Table 5 consists of three parts: initial eigenvalues, rotated eigenvalues, and eigenvalues without rotation. The first one is Kaiser's criterion or the eigenvalue rule in which only the factors are retained

whose eigenvalues are equal or greater than 1.0. Those that are less than this amount will be eliminated from the analysis. For the factors of cultural identity, one to four had the eigenvalues more than 1 or close to 1 and as a result, they remained in the analysis. These four factors may explain 96,355 % of the variance as indicated in table 5.

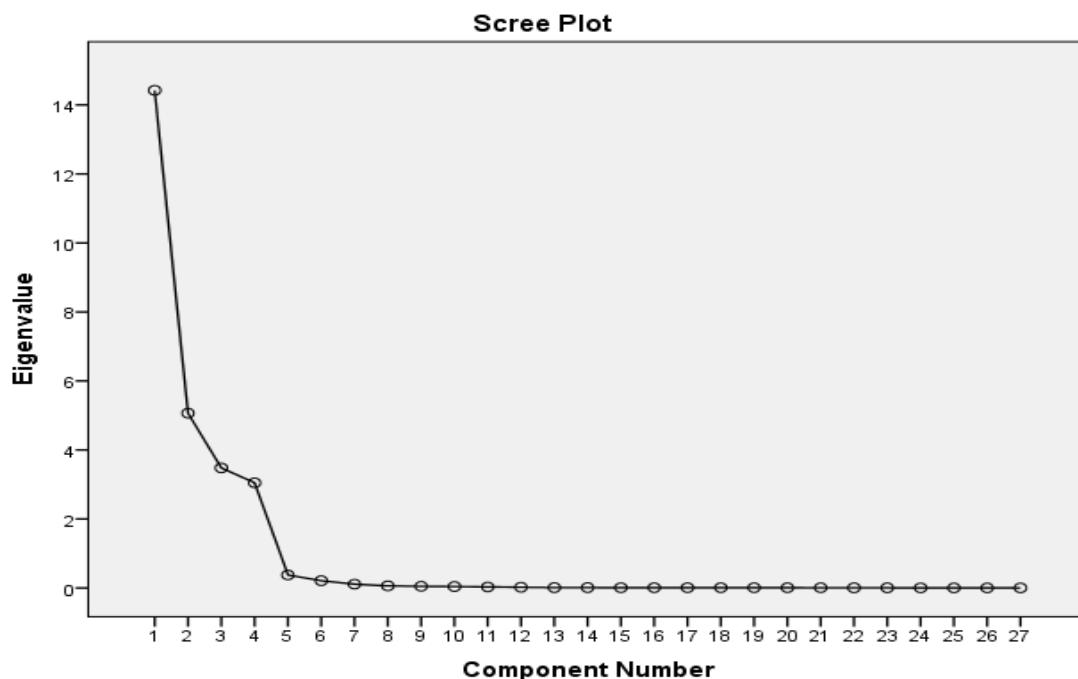
**Table 5**  
*Total Variance Explained*

Components	Initial Eigen values			Eigen values of Extracted Components without Rotation			Eigen values of Extracted Components After Rotation		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	14.422	53.417	53.417	14.422	53.417	53.417	7.743	28.679	28.679
2	5.066	18.765	72.181	5.066	18.765	72.181	6.689	24.775	53.454
3	3.479	12.886	85.068	3.479	12.886	85.068	5.855	21.684	75.138
4	3.048	11.288	96.355	3.048	11.288	96.355	5.728	21.217	96.355
5	0.375	1.391	97.746						
6	0.21	0.778	98.523						
7	0.109	0.403	98.927						
8	0.061	0.226	99.153						
9	0.047	0.174	99.327						
10	0.041	0.153	99.481						
11	0.029	0.107	99.587						
12	0.02	0.073	99.66						
13	0.011	0.039	99.7						
14	0.01	0.035	99.735						
15	0.009	0.034	99.769						
16	0.009	0.033	99.802						

17	0.009	0.033	99.835
18	0.009	0.032	99.867
19	0.008	0.029	99.895
20	0.006	0.023	99.918
21	0.006	0.022	99.94
22	0.005	0.02	99.96
23	0.004	0.016	99.976
24	0.003	0.01	99.985
25	0.002	0.008	99.993
26	0.001	0.004	99.997
27	0.001	0.003	100

Thus, as it is presented in the above table, four factors of cultural identity were extracted because of having eigenvalues larger than 1 or close to 1 and they would explain 553.99 % of the variance. The second way for extracting the suitable number of factors

is by looking at the results of the Catell's scree test in which we should look for a change or break in the plot and keep the factors above the break or elbow. These results are displayed by the scree plot run by SPSS. Figure 1 indicates this scree plot.



**Figure 1**  
*The scree plot of the factors of the stud*

As it is indicated in the above scree plot, after the fourth factor, there is a noticeable decline in the variance of the other factors and since the eigenvalues of the four factors were 1 or greater than 1, they retained in the analy-

sis and others were omitted. The last step in factor analysis is factor rotation to find which items have high loadings on which factors. Table 6 shows a summary of the results of factor rotation and item loadings

**Table 6**  
**Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

Items of Questionnaire	Rotated Components			
	1	2	3	4
No. 1	0.188	0.229	0.213	0.921
No. 2	0.19	0.222	0.201	0.927
No. 4	0.18	0.23	0.189	0.919
No. 5	0.118	0.216	0.204	0.883
No. 6	0.183	0.225	0.234	0.915
No. 8	0.2	0.229	0.194	0.924
No. 9	0.951	0.161	0.102	0.147
No. 10	0.955	0.159	0.109	0.146
No. 11	0.934	0.162	0.158	0.137
No. 12	0.952	0.167	0.102	0.154
No. 13	0.959	0.152	0.097	0.139
No. 14	0.954	0.167	0.099	0.153
No. 15	0.957	0.155	0.099	0.143
No. 16	0.937	0.156	0.162	0.138
No. 17	0.173	0.921	0.182	0.224
No. 18	0.176	0.938	0.19	0.186
No. 19	0.2	0.905	0.184	0.203
No. 20	0.173	0.921	0.188	0.223
No. 21	0.174	0.924	0.183	0.217
No. 22	0.173	0.934	0.193	0.205
No. 23	0.187	0.91	0.196	0.19
No. 24	0.135	0.218	0.925	0.214
No. 25	0.123	0.187	0.944	0.173
No. 26	0.142	0.205	0.926	0.215
No. 27	0.123	0.195	0.944	0.178
No. 29	0.155	0.192	0.925	0.223
No. 30	0.122	0.185	0.942	0.185

As it is noted in table 5, each of the items had loadings on four remained factors after rotation hence confirming that the questionnaire in this study and its items correctly measured what they were supposed to measure. On the whole, the findings in the pilot study supported the reliability and validity of the self-constructed questionnaire and as a result, it could be applied for the confirmatory factor analysis.

### Participants

Considering the total population of advanced EFL learners of Safir Language Institute, a sample of 384 students were selected. That is to say, the participants included 384 English language learners pursuing their studies at advanced level of proficiency in Safir English Language Institute in Tehran. The sample in-

cluded 86 male and 298 female learners with the age ranged from 18 to 35.

### Instrument

The instrument of the main phase of the study was the self-constructed questionnaire. As it was mentioned, the questionnaire went through the processes of checking for validity and reliability prior to be used in the main phase. The final questionnaire included 27 items. The reliability of the questionnaire was again calculated for the main sample with Cronbach's alpha reaching 0.891.

### Data Collection Procedure

This phase consisted of gathering 384 participants' viewpoints through distributing the validated questionnaire among them. Filling out the questionnaire took almost 25 minutes and



then they were gathered and the responses were analyzed by SPSS 22.

### Data Analysis Procedure

One of the purposes of this study was to develop a model of cultural identity among Iranian advanced EFL learners and to achieve this, it was decided to use Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) which was run through the use of LISREL 8.8.

## RESULTS

### Qualitative Results

This part presents the data gathered through analyzing the interviews with 20 English learners. The interview was designed based on consultation with previous research and two professors who were experts in this research area. The questions consisted of open-ended questions which addressed the suitable cultural model for Iranian EFL learners. The language of the interview was Persian and there was no time limit for each interview session. Indeed, the researcher analyzed the data and translated the results into English. To make sure about the accuracy of the translation, back-translation was used. Moreover, each interview was taken individually. Based on Ary, et al., (2013), credibility and dependability are the standards of rigor in qualitative study. To establish the dependability and credibility of the interview data, low-inference descriptors and member checks were used. Using member checks involved the researcher's sharing her interpretations of the data with the participants to avoid any miscommunication, identify inaccurate interpretations, and show courtesy to the participants by letting them read what has been written about them.

As an important concept, cultural identity and its four significant factors have appealed to some researchers; religious beliefs (Klonoff & Landrine, 2000), cultural attitudes (Pishghadm & Kamyabi, 2009), national attitudes (Pishghadm & Kamyabi, 2009), and ideas about language (Bhugra, Bhui, Mallett, Desai, Singh, & Leff, 1999). In what follows, some extractions from the interviewees' perceptions about these four factors are presented.

**Religious Beliefs:** Religion is one of the main constituents of one's identity. Most people receive some forms of religion training although as adults they may choose a different path (Klonoff & Landrine, 2000). The following embraces comments taken from participants' viewpoints related to religion. It was amazing that most learners expressed great ideas about their religion and they showed how much they loved it.

1. *I think religion is an important reason and Iranians love their religion.*

2. *We are proud of our religion, we wear dark color clothes in Moharram, etc.*

*Every day, we pray, we go to holy places, and we feel great to help charities.*

3. *Our religion is very important. We think we can reach God by our religion.*

**Cultural Attitudes:** central to the concept of cultural identity is attachment to one's own culture. Positive attitudes toward native culture is an indication of strong cultural identity (Pishghadm & Kamyabi, 2009). The participants of this study also showed they were proud of their Iranian culture and their traditions. Some ideas related to culture extracted from their interviews are:

1. *Norooz and Yalda eve are among the reasons of having a wonderful culture.*

2. *We have a lot of traditions in Iran, our clothes are different, and our foods are popular around the world.*

3. *We have some great manners. For example, we respect our elderlies a lot and try to be polite in front of them. Culture is the only common solution in a society to eliminate any needs.*

4. *Our landmarks in Iran like in Tehran, Shiraz, Isfahan, our rich history, foods, wonderful architecture, literature, music, historical events, and celebrations represent our brilliant culture. Culture is like a software and civilization is like a hard ware.*

**National Attitudes:** like cultural attitudes, national attitudes form a part of cultural identity. In national attitudes, feelings and the sense of attachment of people toward members of territory form an element of cultural identity. Be-

low are some extracts from the interviews regarding this theme. As it is clear, the participants indicated their love and support for their country as Iranian individuals.

*1. I love my country, my nationality, and the great history of my country.*

*2. I like to travel around the world to get familiar with different nations, however, I like to go back and live in my own hometown.*

*3. We are all Iranians no matter where we were born and fortunately, we respect everyone regardless of where they live.*

*4. I don't believe in borders. You can live everywhere but you are always Iranians.*

**Language Component:** Language is also an apparent indication of ones' cultural identity (Bhugra et al., 1999). The competence of a person to fluently speak his native language clearly indicates to which group (e.g. nation) that person belongs. Some of learners' points of view about Farsi and their deep and true love for it are presented here:

*1. Every language shows the culture of that country.*

*2. Farsi is a symbol of our rich and ancient history and civilization. In spite of knowing several languages, I prefer to speak Farsi to show we love our beautiful and wonderful language.*

*3. Every country has its own language which should be used to indicate that the people of that country have not been badly affected by the globalization.*

After conducting the interviews, the students' comments were transcribed. The current study employed grounded theory to analyze data in the qualitative section and develop a model of language learners' cultural identity. That is to say, after getting familiar with the data, the researcher coded the data based on the three steps in the grounded approach theory namely, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The steps taken as open, axial and selective coding help to ensure the systematicity in the analysis. The factors that were extracted can in each phase of analysis paved the way for the subsequent stage.

First, in the open coding phase, the data were broken down into parts to compare and contrast. Some words, phrases, and statements reported by the students were selected as delivering valuable material for the purported method. The process started with details of more general concepts. The researchers gave more questions on these concepts and searched the data more intensively. The general concepts were put into different categories to give a meaningful picture of the analyzed data.

Second, in the axial coding phase, the researchers investigated each category, considering who, what, where, and why. The purpose was to investigate and describe the explicit relationship between categories. This process continued to find the core categories. It is the category with the numerous and strongest link to the other categories considering the variations and exceptions. The researcher searched for something that can connect all the categories to provide a coherent story.

The last stage of coding was selective coding. Among different categories and their links provided in the axial coding section, the researchers searched for the core category with the highest links to guide further data collection.

All in all, what interviewees expressed, showing their cultural identity and they were classified into the four main categories (e.g. Religion, Culture, Nationality, Language). In the next step of the study, the items related to the components of cultural identity were shaped into the questionnaire with Likert type scale of five points ranging "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree". The purpose of this step was collect data for testing the model. In other words, through designing the questionnaire, it was possible to elicit data on each aspect of the model and statistically test the factorial structure of the mod.

### Quantitative Results

#### Checking the Reliability of the Questionnaire

To assure that the questionnaire had the acceptable reliability for being applied in the main phase, Cronbach's alpha was calculated again. Table 7 indicates the reliability of the questionnaire.

**Table 7**  
*Cronbach's Alpha Report of the Questionnaire*

Factors	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Religion	6	0.801
Culture	8	0.846
Nationality	7	0.860
Language	6	0.783
Cultural Identity	27	0.891

As it is displayed in table 7, the Cronbach's alpha index is 0.891 which shows that the questionnaire and its four factors were acceptable to go through other parts.

### Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Results

To check the validity of the model of cultural identity, the confirmatory factor analysis was applied using structural equation modeling

(SEM). In fact, CFA is used to check the goodness of fit of one or more hypothesized factor models of a measure (Adelheid & Penny, 2012, p. 127). LISREL 8.8 software (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2006) was used to run CFA and the following results were rendered.

### Normality of the Factors

Prior to CFA, Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test (K-S test), which is a nonparametric test of the equality of one-dimensional probability distributions to compare a sample with a reference probability distribution, was used. Table 8 indicates the information regarding this test. As it is displayed in table 8, K-S significance for all the factors is less than 0.05 and the amount of skewness and Kurtosis are between (-2, 2) Thus, the normality of the data for all the factors was proved

**Table 8**  
*Results of K-S Test for the Factors of the Study*

Factors	K-S Test Statistic	K-S Significance	Skewness	Kurtosis
Religion	0.130	0.000	-0.194	-0.903
Culture	0.077	0.000	-0.401	-0.462
Nationality	0.097	0.000	-0.360	-0.629
Language	0.102	0.000	-0.447	-0.173
Cultural Identity	0.059	0.002	-0.373	-0.226

### KMO Test

The factorability of the data can be checked through two statistical tests of Bartlett's test which should be significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) and the

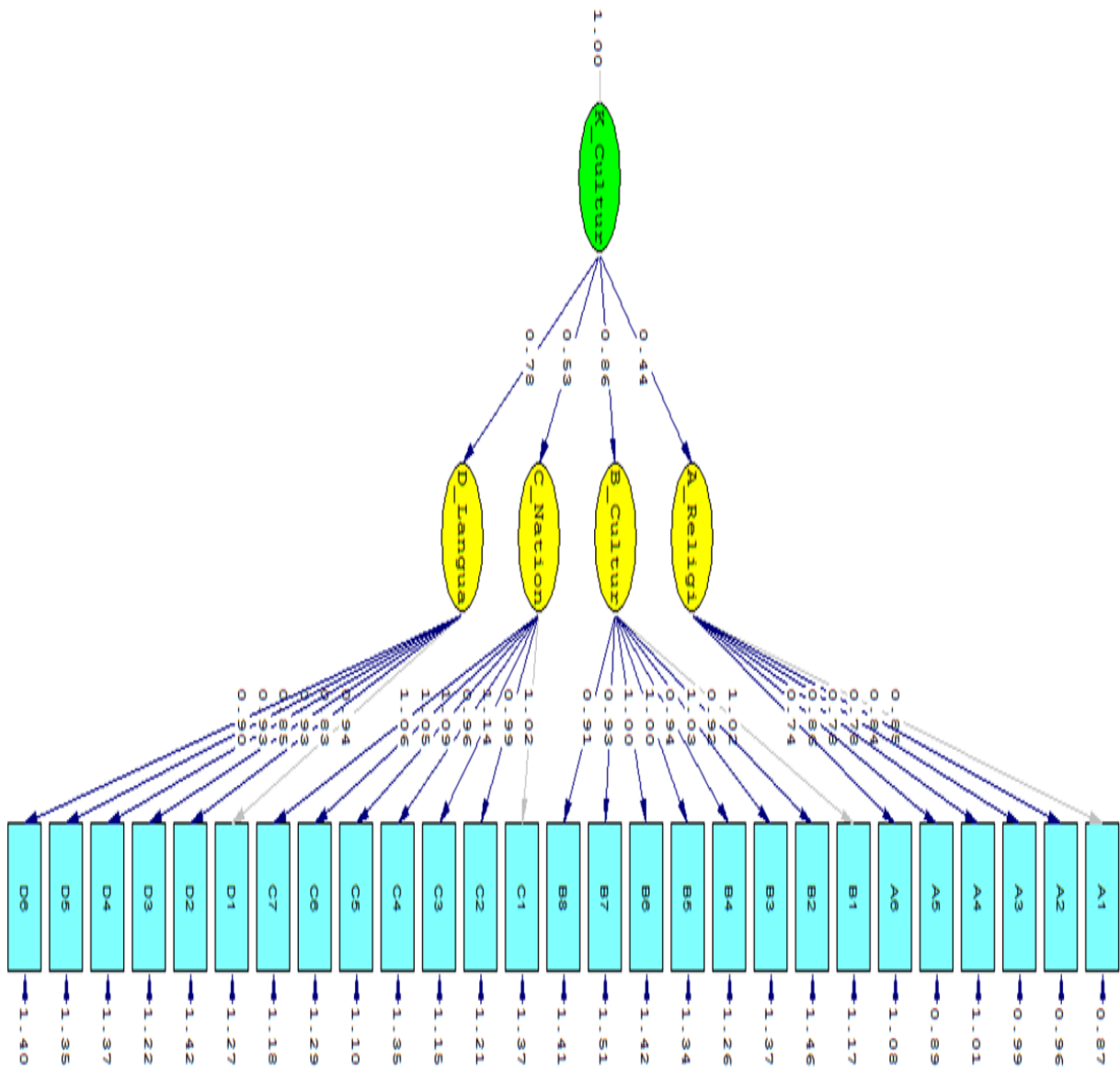
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy minimum of which should be 0.6. The indexes of these two tests for this study are presented in table 9.

**Table 9**  
*KMO and Bartlett's Test*

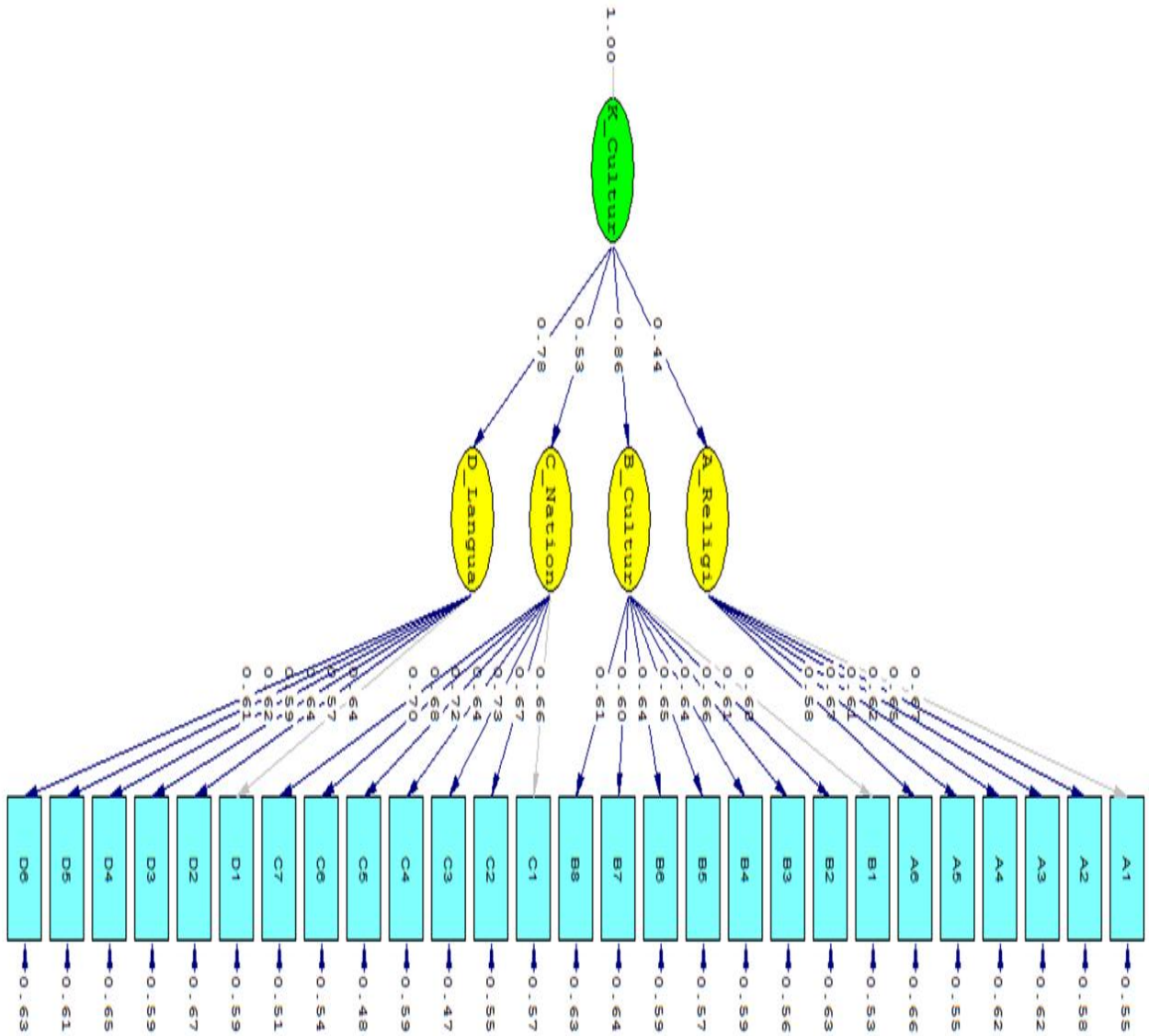
Cultural Identity Questionnaire	Bartlett's Test Sig.	KMO
1-27	0.000	0.892

Since KMO is more than 0.7, it is concluded that KMO and the significance of the Bartlett's test for this questionnaire are acceptable which supports the suitability of

the data in the model. Table 10 indicates all the relationships among factors in CFA. As it is clear, Beta is greater than 0.3 and T-value is more than 1.96.



**Figure 2**  
*Unstandardized Coefficients Diagram*



**Figure 3**  
*Standardized Coefficients Diagram*

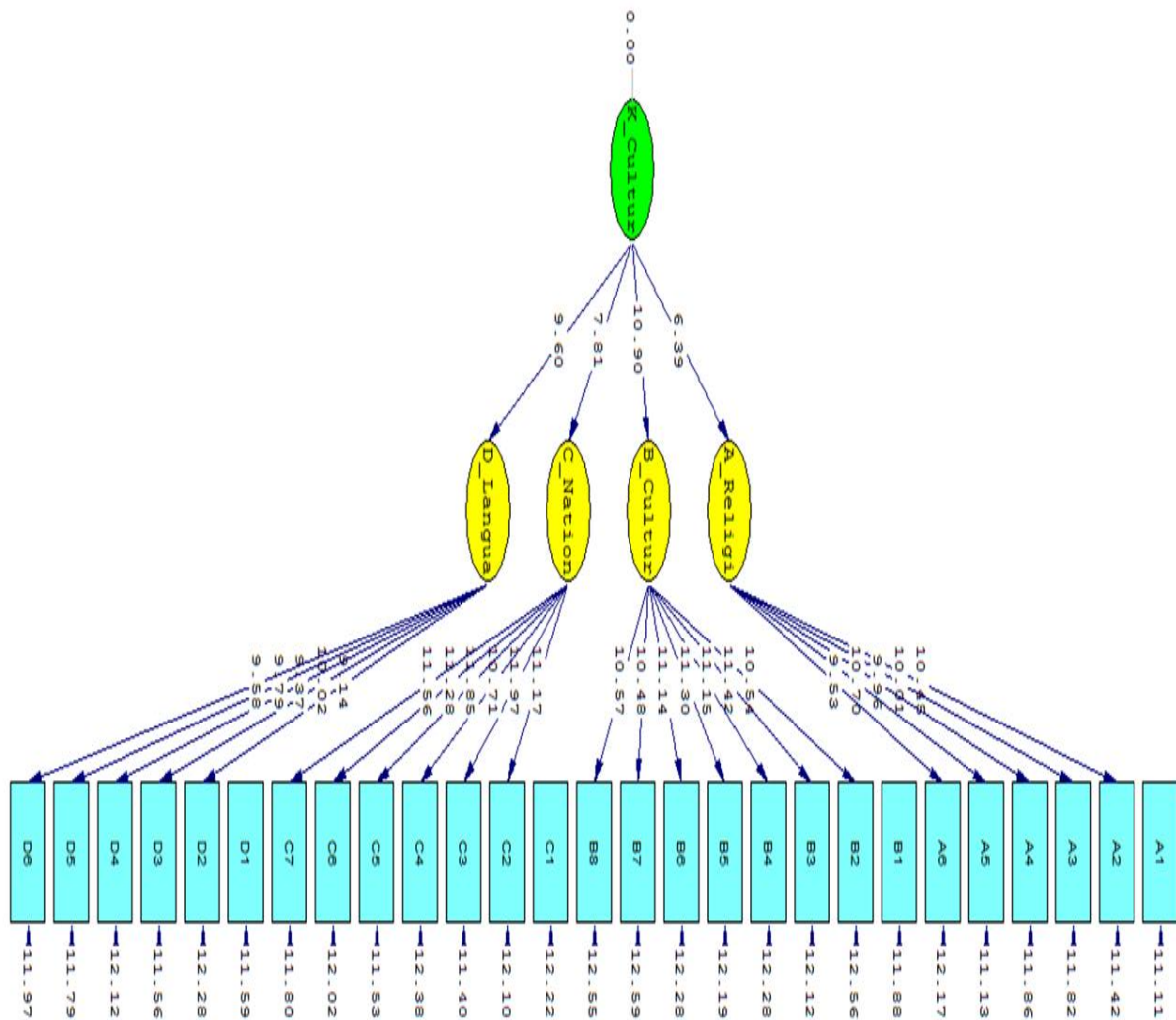


Figure 4  
T-values Diagram

Table 10  
 *$\beta$  and T-Value of Items of the Questionnaire*

Factors	Items of Questionnaire	B	T-Value
Religion	1	0.67	13.50
	2	0.65	12.92
	3	0.62	12.11
	4	0.61	11.96
	5	0.67	13.49
	6	0.58	11.24
Culture	7	0.69	14.37
	8	0.61	12.27
	9	0.66	13.72
	10	0.64	13.24
	11	0.65	13.47
	12	0.65	13.23
	13	0.60	12.16
	14	0.61	12.31

<b>Nationality</b>	15	0.66	13.60
	16	0.67	13.98
	17	0.73	15.69
	18	0.64	13.10
	19	0.72	15.35
	20	0.68	14.16
	21	0.70	14.73
<b>Language</b>	22	0.64	12.67
	23	0.57	11.08
	24	0.64	12.74
	25	0.59	11.47
	26	0.62	12.29
	27	0.61	11.94

**Table 11**  
*The Obtained and the Acceptable Fit Indices*

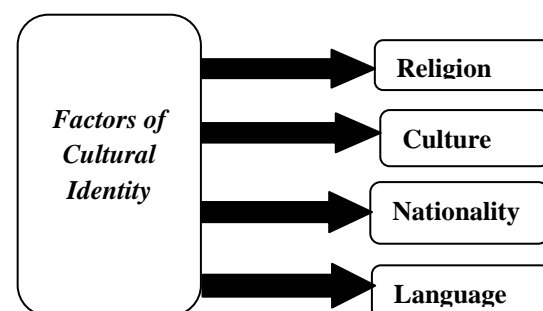
Fit Indices	RMSEA	Chi - Square/df	SRMR	GFI	NFI	CFI	IFI	RFI
The Acceptable Value	0.08 $\geq$	$\leq$ 3.00	$\leq$ 0.08	0.9 $\leq$	0.9 $\leq$	0.9 $\leq$	0.9 $\leq$	0.9 $\leq$
The Obtained Value	0.043	1.705	0.047	0.90	0.94	0.97	0.97	0.93

To check the fit of the model to the data, some scholars, such as Jaccard and Wan (1996) suggested using indices from different classes because this strategy helps overcome the limitations of each index. As a result, the obtained values for fit indices (Table 11) were checked against the desired values. For RMSEA, according to Steiger (2007), an upper limit of 0.08 seems to be the general consensus among authorities in the area and as it is clear in Table 11, the obtained value in the present study is 0.043 which is less than 0.08. The relative chi-square that was calculated for this model was 1.705 which is less than the upper limit of 3.00 reported in Ullman and Bentler (2003) and the obtained GFI was 0.90. As it is noticeable from the above table of the fit indices, it can be concluded that the proposed model does fit to the data. As the final step in this phase,  $\beta$  and T-Value of the ariables were considered for the second time and it became clear that there was a significant relationship among the factors of the study due to the fact that  $\beta$  was positive and T-Value was more than 1.96.

### Answers to the Research Questions

To answer the first research question of the present study and based on the qualitative

results obtained from the interviews with 20 English learners and inspecting their opinions and perceptions toward cultural identity, four main factors of cultural identity were determined in a context like Iran. These factors were then presented in a 30-item questionnaire in the first section and afterwards, three of them were removed due to their failure to meet the requirements of the exploratory factor analysis. These four main factors were: religion, culture, nationality, and language presented in figure 5.

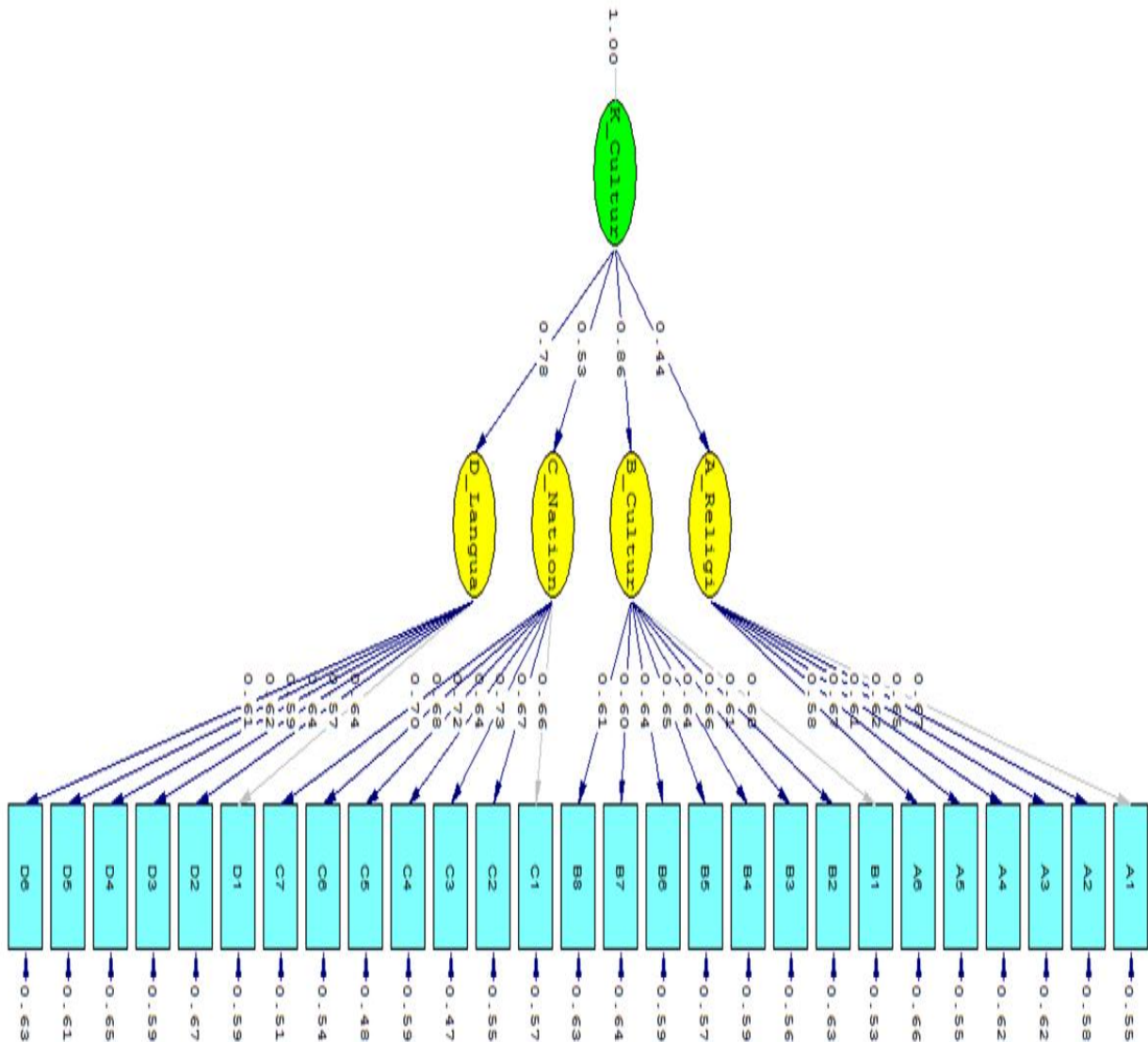


**Figure 5**  
*Main Factors of Cultural*

In order to answer the second research question, the results of the confirmatory factor analysis needed to be examined to check for the fit of the model. Different indices which are indicators of a model's

good fit were calculated, many of which indicate that the model presented in the present study can be a valid one for future re-

search. Therefore, the final model of Iranian advanced EFL learners' cultural identity can be presented in figure 6.



**Figure 6**  
*The final model of Cultural Identity*

Moreover, the idea of developing a model in this study has also been considered by some scholars in a particular context like language learning. For instance, Samimi & Sahragard (2018) proposed a model of reading strategy using SEM for ELT students and the results substantiated the initial structure of the reading questionnaire as the validated model. In fact, it seems that the basic constituents of language cannot be separated from the users' viewpoints. However, the findings of this study are in contrast with a study conducted by Razmjoo

(2010) showing no significant relationship between L2 achievement and the aspects of identity. The fact that Iranian cultural identity had a positive relationship with English language achievement is also in contrast with the concept of social solidarity. The theme "Social Solidarity" refers to the ties in social relations connecting people to one another, which measures the amount of talk happening between individuals (Pishghadam & Sadeghi, 2011). Based on such concept, it can be explained that people with more score in cultural



identity, considering four extracted factors of cultural identity in this study, would enjoy more solidarity and hence would be less interested in foreign culture and language.

This study was suffering from some limitations. For instance, the variables of the study were measured through self-report measures like questionnaire that may impose some limitations. In self-report measures, participants report what they perceive as their true response. Therefore, it is possible that participants are not honest when answering or what they perceive as their true actions or feelings may not be the real actions or feelings. In addition, the research cannot guarantee that findings of the current study are directly related to cultural identity and second language learning. Various intervening variables that are characteristics of individuals can affect the nature of the relationship between cultural identity and English language learning. Due to the fact that a comprehensive study is hardly achievable, the study was delimited in certain aspects. For instance, the sampling was cluster sampling and all the participants were chosen. While ethnographical observations can produce much richer data about people's cultural identity. In addition, many of the questionnaires were distributed not by the researcher but by other instructors at the institute; consequently, this may have had some effects on the performance of the participants on the questionnaire. Therefore, future studies may consider these points to provide the language learning and teaching community with a more comprehensive picture of such items.

## CONCLUSION

Most research carried out on the English language learning has focused on English as a second language while ignoring the field of English as a foreign language (EFL), particularly in a context like Iran where Iranians do not have enough exposure to English. Fortunately, a growing number of recent studies have addressed the role of cultural identity in English language learning or achievement (Ho, 2009; Naqeeb, 2012; Zhao, 2010; Sabatin, 2013; Razmjoo & Izadpanah, 2012). The purpose of this study was exploring dif-

ferent factors of cultural identity in order to present a validated model of cultural identity for Iranian advanced EFL learners based on their perceptions and attitudes toward their cultural identity. Obviously, this research employed a mixed methods design and as the first step in the qualitative phase, 20 EFL learners studying at advanced level in Safir English language institute in Tehran were interviewed and based on their answers to interview questions, written with the help of literature review, and through three stages of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, four factors of cultural identity including religion, culture, nationality, and language were extracted. The factors obtained were utilized to construct a questionnaire on cultural identity with 30 items. The questionnaire went through exploratory factor analysis for the sake of validity and after its validity and reliability were corroborated through a pilot study, it was distributed among 384 advanced EFL learners in the quantitative phase of the study containing 27 items. Afterwards, SEM analysis was run through LISREL 8.8 to confirm that the final proposed model could be a valid one for future research.

Regarding the cultural identity, four main factors were extracted from the participants' interviews. Overall, they included religion, culture, nationality, and language. The participants showed their deep and sincere love toward their religion and they asserted that it did have roots in their culture. They also indicated how important it was to follow their cultural routines and expressed they were proud of being Iranians. They also mentioned that speaking Farsi was a key factor to prove they had a rich history and a great culture. That means despite the fact that they are fond of learning English, they love to use their native language. Analyzing four factors and developing cultural identity model through confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling, it was decided that the data obtained through qualitative interviews and the questionnaire consistently fitted the hypothesized model, and consequently the proposed model of Iranian advanced EFL learners' cultural

identity could be used as a valid model for future investigation.

Some implications related to Iranian context of language teaching are stated below. Language teachers should be informed regarding how identity and foreign language learning are connected. They need to have adequate knowledge about Iranian model of cultural identity in EFL classes. Moreover, they need to know what factor of cultural identity would affect learners in learning English language positively or negatively. Language teachers also need to be equipped with strategies to deal with challenges of conflicts between EFL learners' cultural identity and foreign language learning. In teacher training programs, different aspects of language teaching should be highlighted and enough information regarding the direct and indirect way of identity change among students should be given to the teachers. More importantly, it is recommended that the issue of identity be part of whole language teaching curriculum. Curriculum designers and policy makers should be sensitive to identity issues particularly in language learning context. Such sensitiveness would include sensitive materials and also sensitive methodology to different aspects of language learning. Additionally, it would be beneficial for educational community to study and develop some models of cultural identity with focus on language achievement among Iranian EFL learners.

### CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The main variables of the study were defined and discussed with references made to the previous studies. Regarding the role of culture in language achievement, the relationship between language and culture was highlighted and it was discussed that the communicative competence as the most influential theory of language proficiency contains the component of culture as one of the factors contributing to overall language proficiency. Moreover, all arguments pointed to the fact that teaching culture is an inseparable part of language teaching and the awareness in terms of culture has some bearing on language achievement. Another issue highlighted in this study was the

relationship between language and identity and how language can possibly contribute to the formation of identity. Several studies targeting various aspects of culture, identity, and language achievement were available, but it became evident that none of them dealt directly with the topic of the current paper especially in the Iranian context. Thus, the current study is invaluable in terms of filling the gap in the current literature and its contribution to the literature on language, culture, and identity. On top of that, the importance of the cultural identity of the Iranian learners and their language skills in the educational context have a great impact in this field.

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