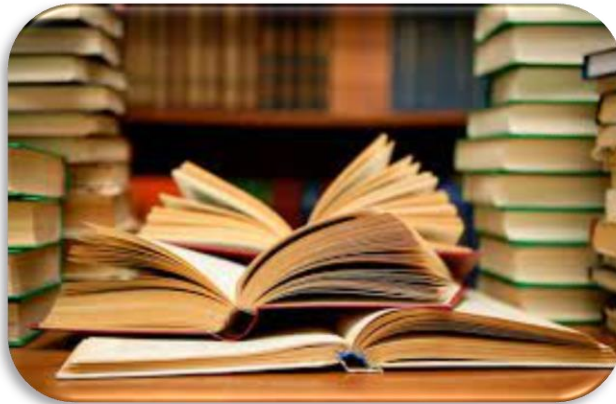


Research Paper



Towards Validating an Already-proposed Pluralistic Curriculum Model for ESP in Iran

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at validating the already-proposed pluralistic curriculum model for ESP in Iran. In line with the objective of the present study, a correlational-survey design was used by utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) (i.e., exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis). The participants recruited for this study were in the two groups. The first group consisted of 120 male and female ESP students studying at different fields at the B.A. level in different universities of Iran. The second group consisted of 100 Iranian male and female ESP teachers teaching ESP courses at the B.A. level in different universities of Iran. The two groups were selected through purposeful sampling. The present study used a researcher-made questionnaire for the purpose of data collection, that was developed based on the already-proposed model. Data analysis was conducted through SEM (i.e., exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis) and Cronbach's Alpha test. According to the results, the already-proposed model pluralistic curriculum model for ESP in Iran consists of three main components including pluralistic ESP teaching, pluralistic ESP content and materials, and pluralistic ESP assessments. Moreover, the results of SEM and Cronbach's Alpha test confirmed the validity and reliability of the already-proposed pluralistic curriculum model for ESP in Iran. The results have some implications for ESP curriculum developers, teachers, and students.

Keywords: Pluralism, Curriculum, Pluralistic Curriculum, ESP.

اعتبار سنجی یک مدل برنامه درسی کثرت گرایانه از قبل پیشنهادی برای ESP در ایران
این مطالعه با هدف اعتبار سنجی مدل برنامه درسی کثرت گرایانه پیشنهادی برای ESP در ایران انجام شد. در راستای اهداف پژوهش حاضر، از طرح همبستگی - پیمایشی با استفاده از مدل سازی معادلات ساختاری (SEM) (یعنی تحلیل عاملی اکتشافی و تاییدی) استفاده شد. شرکت کنندگانی که برای این مطالعه انتخاب شدند در دو گروه بودند. گروه اول متشکل از ۱۲۰ دانشجوی دختر و پسر ESP بود که در رشته های مختلف در دانشگاه های مختلف ایران و گروه دوم متشکل از ۱۰۰ معلم زن و مرد ایرانی ESP بود که از دانشگاه های مختلف ایران دو گروه به روش نمونه گیری هدفمند انتخاب شدند. پژوهش حاضر به منظور گردآوری داده ها از پرسشنامه محقق ساخته که بر اساس مدل ارائه شده از قبل تهیه شده است، استفاده شده است. تجزیه و تحلیل داده ها از طریق SEM (یعنی تحلیل عاملی اکتشافی و تاییدی) و آزمون الفای کرونباخ انجام شد. با توجه به نتایج، مدل پیشنهادی الگوی برنامه درسی کثرت گرایانه برای ESP در ایران از سه مولفه اصلی شامل آموزش ESP کثرت گرا، محتوا و مواد ESP کثرت گرا و ارزیابی های ESP کثرت گرا تشکیل شده است. علاوه بر این، نتایج آزمون SEM و الفای کرونباخ اعتبار و پایایی مدل برنامه درسی کثرت گرای پیشنهادی برای ESP در ایران را تایید کرد. نتایج برخی مفاهیم برای توسعه دهندگان برنامه درسی ESP، معلمان و دانش آموزان دارد.

واژگان کلیدی: پلورالیسم، برنامه درسی، کثرت گرایانه، انگلیسی برای اهداف ویژه

INTRODUCTION

Recently, globalization has exposed English as a foreign language (EFL) learning to some challenges in different ways. An instance of such complexities is the changes in societies as a consequence of the emergence of pluralistic communities in which pluralistic education is a must (Zohrabi, Razmjoo, & Ahmadi, 2019). According to Stika (2012), we observe a change of paradigms in societies, which are rooted in pluralism. Pluralism is defined as the space of coexistence of diverse ideologies, attitudes, views, ideas, languages, values, norms, cultures, races, and political arrangements (Hongladarom, 2011) which seeks to shape new thought and knowledge streams through diversity. As stated by Giselbrecht (2009), pluralistic education, by nature, is a democratic concept which puts emphasis on linguistic and cultural diversity, open-mindedness, mutual resilience and shared understanding in educational systems. The main goal of pluralistic education is educating learners in a way that they become oriented towards multicultural communication and education (Motamed, Yarmohammadian, & Yusefy, 2013). According to McConnell (2008), pluralistic education supports difference and diversity rather than similarity and sameness to stimulate learners to be involved in multi-cultural interactions and understanding.

One of the important strands in L2 education is English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Islam, 2016). ESP refers to “English as a second or foreign language teaching and learning with the main goal of using English in a specific domain” (Paltridge & Starfield, 2013, p. 2). ESP constitutes an important element of various fields of study including medical sciences, computer science, humanities, basic sciences, etc. ESP is associated with its own method, content, teaching strategies, and evaluation procedures (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Kitkauskiene (2006) suggested that the objective of ESP is nurturing learners’ linguistic and professional skills/abilities, knowledge and competence. To achieve this aim, ESP curriculum and educational materials should be intermingled with a rich amount of diversity and plurality so that the diverse needs of the new generation of ESP learners are appropriately met. However, field observations and literature review are reflective of the fact that pluralistic education has not been tried in relation to ESP, at least in the context of Iran.

The significance of curriculum in any educational system including ESP cannot be denied. Therefore, generating shifts in curricula is a necessary step in curriculum planning in different environments including Iran to synchronize them with new insights and viewpoints (Riazi & Razmjou, 2004). Accordingly, Pring (2004) argued, the content of the curricula should be transformed so that they reflect the most recent changes in any academic arena and can fulfill the educational needs of learners. This seems necessary in Iran as a country wherein ESP needs of learners have been shifted over the last 10-15 years (Alibakhshi & Rezaee, 2014; Riazi & Razmjou, 2004; Zohrabi, Razmjoo, & Ahmadi, 2019). Throughout the World, pluralistic education has been implemented as a means to respond to new needs of learners in EFL/ESL learning. The argument is that pluralistic education acts as a solution in the globalized educational world (Ferrero, 2003). Contrary to this, ESP system in Iran is still characterized with Unitarianism as a traditional approach to education which leaves almost no place for diversity and pluralism (Parker, 2019) which is devoid of any plurality and multiculturalism. To be more specific, the review of the literature reflects that, to the best knowledge of the researcher, no pluralistic curriculum has been proposed for ESP teaching in the context of Iran. As interpreted by Kumar (2018), that some educational systems resist against pluralistic education is due to the fact that the difficulty of working with diverse groups of learners cannot be fully conceived.



To bridge the above gap, the researchers of the present study developed a pluralistic curriculum model for ESP in Iran in a previous study (Behboudi et al., 2022). However, validating any newly developed model is an inevitable follow-up phase in modeling studies. To address this issue, the present study was launched to validate the already-proposed pluralistic curriculum model for ESP in Iran by addressing following research question:

Is the already-proposed pluralistic curriculum model for ESP in Iran valid and reliable?

Significance of the Study

This study is worth conducting for several reasons. Firstly, given the world education's orientation towards multiculturalism and pluralism, any attempt to make the Iranian ELT system pluralistic may be of high importance. Second, planning a pluralistic curriculum model for ESP can open the door to the improvement of students' English communication potentials which is considered a necessity in today's so-called globalized village, by making them aware of the merits of diversity in cultures, languages, dialects, worldviews, customs, etc. for educational systems. Third, proposing such a curriculum model may reduce the static status of the current Iranian ESP system and its policymaking and planning processes, and lead to promising transformations in the system (Zohrabi, Razmjoo, & Ahmadi, 2019). Fourth, such a study can be a leading stance for teacher educators, instructors and teachers in the area of ESP in reformulating their educational materials by taking the components of a pluralistic curriculum into account in teaching ESP. Fifth, although some studies in the Iranian context have been conducted on pluralism and pluralistic education from different viewpoints such as general education, ELT in high schools, national curriculum, etc., to the best knowledge of the researcher, no pluralistic curriculum model has been proposed in the ESP literature in Iranian context. Thus, this study is of novelty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Childs (2017) investigated the history of multicultural education in the USA. This study was an attempt to explore viewpoints and positions which can contribute to formation of multicultural curricula in the future. This study discussed about the need to uncover the role of multiculturalism in the classroom by recognizing the need to go beyond surface approaches to inter-cultural teaching. It was concluded that since demographics of students is subjected to inevitable shifts, multicultural ideas should be integrated in such areas as planning future curricula, teacher education, etc. Enyew and Melesse (2018) examined the extent to which the issue of pluralism is infused into the environments of Universities in Ethiopia. By random sampling, four hundred forty-four instructors and students were selected from the five universities. A structured questionnaire and an unstructured interview were used as data collection instruments. The quantitative data were analyzed using a one-sample t-test whereas the qualitative one was analyzed using narration. The quantitative data disclosed that the issue of pluralism is infused into the programs of the Universities, whereas the qualitative one did not. Parker (2019) addressed the values of multicultural education for ELT and teacher education in post-secondary education. To this end, different aspects of critical multicultural education were explored as guiding forces for EFL learners in comprehending of the content of courses. It was recommended that stakeholders take these elements as starting points for re-conceptualizing their teaching principles and methods. Zohrabi, Razmjoo, and Ahmadi (2019) sought to design and validate a Pluralistic Curriculum (PC) Model for ELT in high schools of Iran. For this purpose, a mixed methods design was followed. the participants of the study



consisted of curriculum experts. Results of data analysis led to a model consisting of four elements; content, teaching/learning strategies/methods, evaluation and goal. Furthermore, the results led to identification of the following components: pluralistic education, pluralistic evaluation, racial and ethnic equality, social class equality, cultural diversity, etc. Moreover, the model was validated from the perspective of the experts. Behboudi, Nazari Bagha and Amini Farsani (2022) developed a pluralistic curriculum (PC) model for ESP in Iran. The proposed model consisted of the following components: pluralistic ESP teaching, pluralistic ESP materials, and pluralistic ESP content. Each of these components included several subcomponents.

METHOD

Design

In line with the objective of the present study, a correlational-survey design was used by utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) (i.e., exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis). That is, the assumptions of both Cronbach's Alpha test and SEM which were run to check the reliability and validity of the developed model are based on correlational analysis (Creswell, 2015). This step was conducted through designing a questionnaire based on the already-proposed model and distributing it among a remarkably large sample (this is why this part of the design is also considered as a survey).

Participants

The participants recruited for this study were in the two groups. The first group consisted of 120 male and female ESP students studying at different fields at the B.A. level in different universities of Iran. They were in the 19-44 age range. The second group consisted of 100 Iranian male and female ESP teachers teaching ESP courses at the B.A. level in different universities of Iran. They were characterized with teaching and research experience in teaching ESP for more than 10 years. They were Ph.D. holders in the 45-60 age range. The two groups were selected through purposeful sampling because some criterion including teaching and learning ESP was taken into account in selecting them. Purposeful sampling refers to a type of non-probability sampling wherein the participants are selected based on a particular criterion (Creswell, 2015). The participants were made aware of the purpose of the study and they were assured that the data will be kept confidentially and their responses to the questionnaire will not affect their study and job status at all.

Instrument

The present study used a researcher-made questionnaire for the purpose of data collection. The questionnaire which was developed based on the already-proposed model consisted of 60 items in a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This questionnaire was designed based on the components of the already-proposed model. The data gathered through this questionnaire was exposed to SEM and Cronbach's Alpha test to validate the already-proposed model and check its reliability. It took about 40 minutes to fill this questionnaire. The scores were in a range from 60 to 300.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

To collect the data, first, sample selection was conducted through purposive sampling. Then, the ethical considerations were observed by taking the participants' consent and ensuring them about anonymity and confidentiality of their personal information. Next, based on the already-proposed model, a



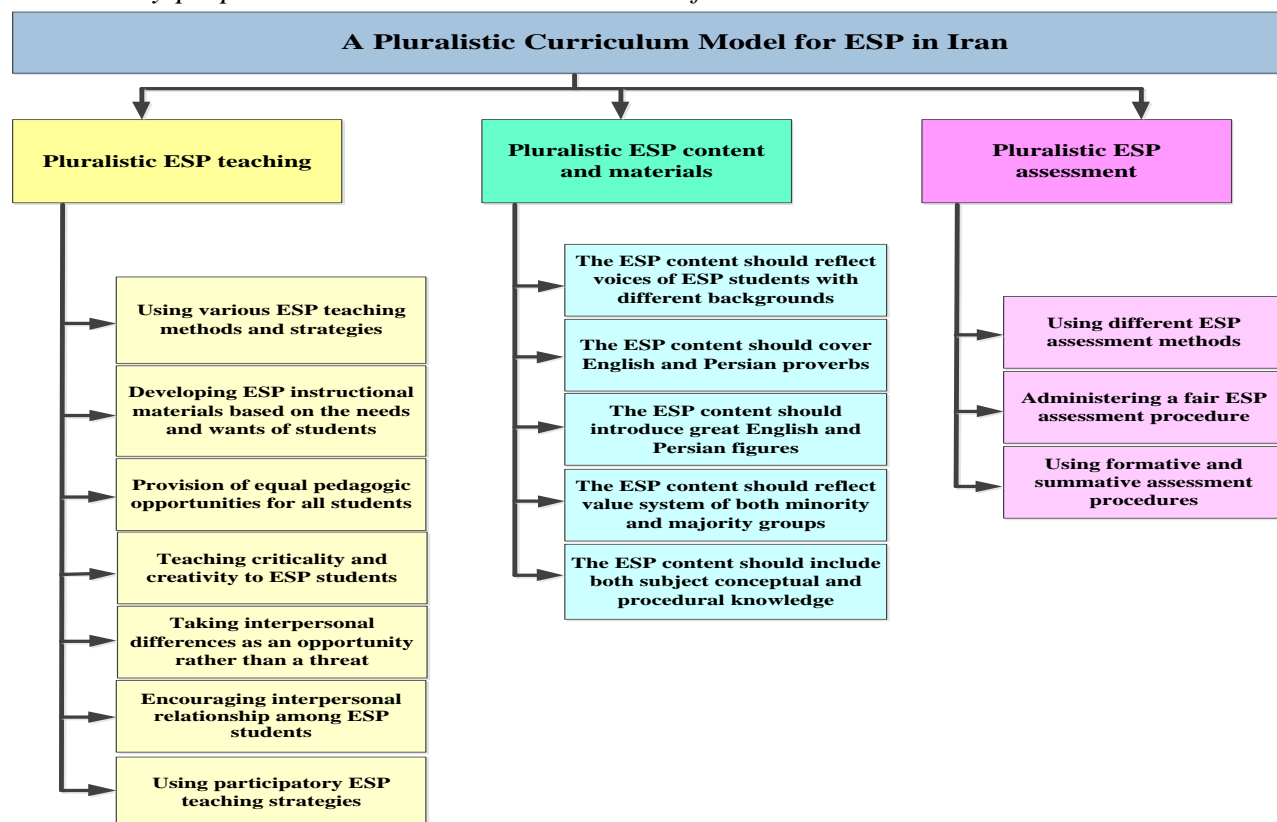
questionnaire was developed by the researcher and it was distributed among the participants through social networks to be filled. Finally, the collected questionnaires were scored for further analysis. Data analysis was conducted through SEM (i.e., exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis) and Cronbach's Alpha test.

RESULTS

Before presenting the results of the research question, it is worth noting that the following model has been developed by the researchers in a previous work (Behboudi et al., 2022).

Figure 1

The Already-proposed Pluralistic Curriculum Model for ESP in Iran



For more information on the details of the model was developed, readers are referred to the study by Behboudi et al. (2022).

Results of the exploratory factor analysis

To answer the research question 'Is the already-proposed pluralistic curriculum model for ESP in Iran valid and reliable?', first, to identify the number of factors and related items to each factor, exploratory factor analysis available in SPSS 26 was run. Before running exploratory factor analysis, Bartlett Sphericity test and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test were used to examine the sphericity assumption and adequacy of content sampling. In table 1 the results of Bartlett and KMO test are presented.



Table 1*The Results of Bartlett and KMO*

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.76
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	7695.26
	df	1372
	Sig.	0.0001

As it can be seen in the Table 1, the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant at the 0.0001 level. The value of KMO is 0.76 which means the data is suitable for applying exploratory factor analysis (KMO is greater than 0.60 and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant). Then, the optimal number of factors was determined using parallel analysis. The result of this analysis is presented in table 2.

Table 2*The Results of Parallel Analysis*

Component number	E.O	M.E.R	Decision
1	<u>16.07</u>	14.95	Accept
2	<u>11.67</u>	10.56	Accept
3	<u>9.16</u>	7.29	Accept
4	6.70	5.46	Accept
5	5.21	4.48	Accept
6	4.69	4.01	Accept
7	4.07	3.98	Accept
8	3.02	2.98	Accept
9	2.78	2.21	Accept
10	2.50	2.11	Accept
11	2.27	1.78	Accept
12	1.96	1.25	Accept
13	1.90	1.17	Accept
14	1.57	1.40	Accept
15	1.20	1.02	Accept
16	0.89	0.98	Reject
17	0.70	0.87	Reject
18	0.57	0.69	Reject

E.O = the eigenvalues of original data. M.E.R = the mean eigenvalues of random data

As it can be seen in the Table 2, 15 components have eigenvalues greater than the mean eigenvalues derived from the random data. Therefore, it is concluded that the optimal number of factors is 15. Then a 15 factor solution using Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation was applied to data. In sum, 19 items were excluded from analysis, because of inadequate factor loading (factor loading lower than 0.3 or loading over unwanted factors).

The result of exploratory factor analysis is shown in table 3.



Table 3*The Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis*

Components, and Eigenvalues of related items															
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8								
q1	0.47	q5	0.60	q9	0.51	q13	0.48	q17	0.15	q21	0.16	q25	0.61	q29	0.11
q2	0.52	q6	0.13	q10	0.42	q14	0.37	q18	0.60	q22	0.35	q26	0.09	q30	0.36
q3	0.45	q7	0.57	q11	0.44	q15	0.07	q19	0.26	q23	0.50	q27	0.48	q31	0.55
q4	0.61	q8	0.48	q12	0.31	q16	0.40	q20	0.49	q24	0.56	q28	0.51	q32	0.23
Components, and Eigenvalues of related items															
9	10	11	12	13	14	15									
q33	0.36	q37	0.71	q41	0.32	q45	0.46	q49	0.51	q53	0.39	q57	0.46		
q34	0.65	q38	0.42	q42	0.65	q46	0.09	q50	0.37	q54	0.14	q58	0.53		
q35	0.22	q39	0.27	q43	0.10	q47	0.35	q51	0.20	q55	0.12	q59	0.27		
q36	0.52	q40	0.18	q44	0.25	q48	0.12	q52	0.37	q56	0.60	q60	0.61		

1: Using various ESP teaching methods and strategies, 2: Developing ESP instructional materials based on the needs and wants of students, 3: Provision of equal pedagogic opportunities for all students, 4: Teaching criticality and creativity to ESP students, 5: Taking interpersonal differences as an opportunity rather than a threat, 6: Encouraging interpersonal relationship among ESP students, 7: Using participatory ESP teaching strategies, 8: The ESP content should reflect voices of ESP students with different backgrounds, 9: The ESP content should cover English and Persian proverbs, 10: The ESP content should introduce great English and Persian figures, 11: The ESP content should reflect value system of both minority and majority groups, 12: The ESP content should include both subject conceptual and procedural knowledge, 13: Using different ESP assessment methods, 14: Administering a fair ESP assessment procedure, & 15: Using formative and summative assessment procedures.

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

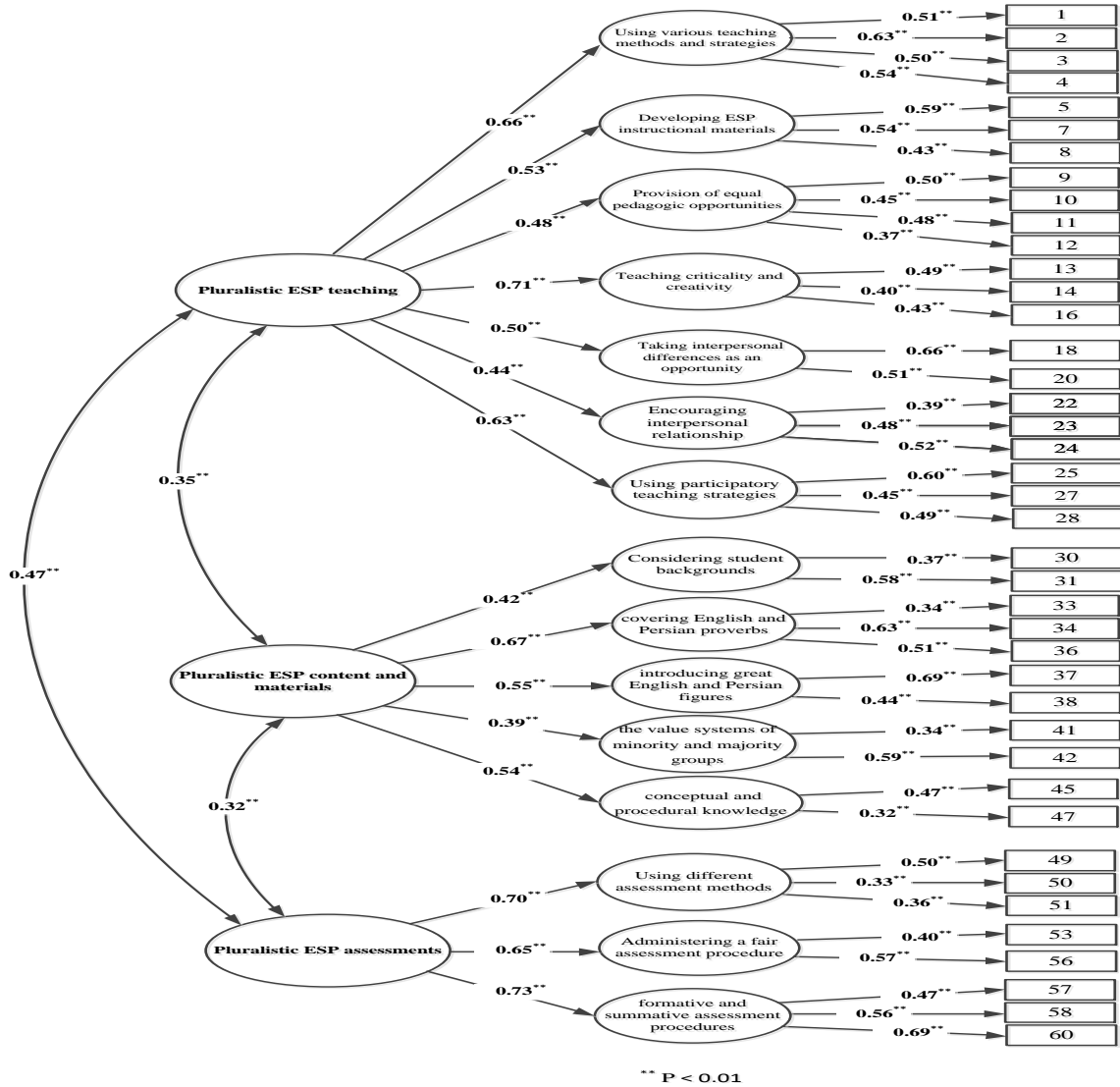
As it can be seen in the Table 3, only 41 items have remained that have suitable factor loading on its corresponding factor. These 15 factors explained 53 % of total variance. Finally, the obtained 15 factor model was examined by confirmatory factor analysis available in the AMOS24 package.

Results of confirmatory factor analysis

The result of confirmatory factor analysis using Maximum likelihood estimation method is presented in graph 1.



Figure 1
The Result of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

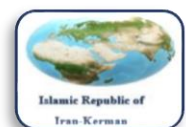


As it can be seen in the Figure 1, all items have acceptable factor loading that is significant at the 0.01 level. The goodness of fit of the model was examined and the most common fit indices are presented in table 4.

Table 4
Fit Indices of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Already-proposed Model

	X ² /df	TLI	CFI	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA	PCLOSE
Fit indices	1.35	0.90	0.92	0.95	0.91	0.03	0.65
Acceptable Fit indices	< 3	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	< 0.08	> 0.05

As it can be seen in the Table 4, the already-proposed model has an acceptable fit index. Altogether, the results of exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis showed that the proposed model enjoys a high validity level.



After examining the validity of the proposed model, the reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The result of Cronbach's Alpha test is shown in table 5.

Table 5

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the Already-proposed Model

Pluralistic Curriculum Model for ESP in Iran	N of items	Alpha coefficients'
Using various ESP teaching methods and strategies	4	0.76
Developing ESP instructional materials based on the needs and wants of students	3	0.70
Provision of equal pedagogic opportunities for all students	4	0.72
Teaching criticality and creativity to ESP students	3	0.75
Taking interpersonal differences as an opportunity rather than a threat	2	0.66
Encouraging interpersonal relationship among ESP students	3	0.74
Using participatory ESP teaching strategies	3	0.69
The ESP content should reflect voices of ESP students with different backgrounds	2	0.53
The ESP content should cover English and Persian proverbs	3	0.67
The ESP content should introduce great English and Persian figures	2	0.46
The ESP content should reflect value system of both minority and majority groups	2	0.58
The ESP content should include both subject conceptual and procedural knowledge	2	0.52
Using different ESP assessment methods	3	0.59
Administering a fair ESP assessment procedure	2	0.38
Using formative and summative assessment procedures	3	0.60
Pluralistic ESP teaching	22	0.84
Pluralistic ESP content and materials	11	0.86
Pluralistic ESP assessments	8	0.71
Total questionnaire	41	0.90

As shown in the Table 5, the already-proposed model of the pluralistic curriculum model for ESP in Iran has the desired reliability.

DISCUSSION

To discuss the findings, it is worth noting that the already-proposed pluralistic curriculum model for ESP in Iran which had already been developed in the study by Behboudi et al. (2022) was presented. It consists of three main components including pluralistic ESP teaching, pluralistic ESP content and materials, and pluralistic ESP assessments. Each of the components in turn consisted of some sub-components that are beyond the patience of this paper. the results of SEM and Cronbach's Alpha test confirmed the validity and reliability of the already-proposed pluralistic curriculum model for ESP in Iran.

Although pluralistic ESP curriculum is among the missing links of the existing literature, most of the components and sub-components extracted in this study have been found in some previous studies on pluralistic education in various wordings (e.g., Abdeli Soltan Ahmadi, & Sadeghi, 2016; Colombo,



2013; Daryai-Hansen et al., 2015; Mostafazadeh et al., 2015; Sadeghi, 2012; Zohrabi, Razmjoo, & Ahmadi, 2019).

The component pluralistic teaching has been reported in some previous studies (Colombo, 2013; Honnett, 1992; Taylor, 1992) as a means to the end of promoting pluralistic education. Teaching is an inseparable element of any curriculum with any theoretical underpinning. Therefore, it seems quite reasonable that pluralistic teaching be a main component of pluralistic curriculum. Moreover, since pluralistic education is fundamentally built upon taking diversity as an opportunity rather than a limitation, the identification of such sub-components for pluralistic ESP teaching as using of various teaching methods, taking the needs of all groups of students into account, trying to make students critical and creative thinkers, and employing cooperative ESP teaching strategies does not remain unjustified.

The component pluralistic content and materials according to which voices and interests of no group of students including the majority and minority groups should be paid heed in developing ESP content; and ESP content should be reflective of the linguistic, cultural, and historical features of both English and Persian languages supports the outcomes of the research by Aikman and Unterhalter (2007).

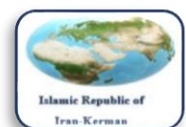
Pluralistic assessments component is in the same line with Sadeghi (2012), Unterhalter (2007), and Zohrabi, Razmjoo and Ahmadi (2019). To be pluralistic in its means and ends, assessment procedures should not be limited but they should encompass different and diverse methods that are participatory and democratic, qualitative and quantitative, summative and formative. In this way, a dynamic assessment is formed with the potential to reveal learners' learning and development, problems, needs, growth, and achievement. With a view to a thinking line in pluralistic education which says that learners' minority membership should not be led to being deprived from their involvement and participation in evaluation procedures, this component is associated with merits for majority group students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the outcomes of the current study, it can be concluded that to reach educational balance in ESP education in Iran, marginalization, discrimination and injustice should be put aside. Moreover, different groups of ESP students from different backgrounds, races, nationalities and religions should be paid attention in terms of their educational needs and wants in different stages of developing ESP curriculum (Mohammadi, Kamal Kharazi, Kazemifard, & Pourkarim, 2016).

Furthermore, it could be concluded that different forms of evaluation methods should be implemented in assessing ESP students. The ESP evaluation should not be constrained to one or two specific methods, but it should cover different evaluation methods wherein different groups of stakeholders can participate in the evaluation process. What is more, it can be concluded that ESP curriculum designers and teachers should not constrain ESP teaching to the pre-determined ESP textbooks wherein fixed teaching and evaluation procedures are encouraged; but they should have the right and freedom to make any changes which might promote the application of PC model. Last but not least, it is concluded that ESP teachers' and students' voices about the shortcomings of the current ESP curricula should be heard by decision makers in the area of the content of ESP textbooks.

Concerning the implications of the findings, ESP Curriculum developers need to take the components and sub-components of the PC into account while developing a curriculum for ESP in Iran. They should bear in mind that ignoring the PC components and sub-components has certain negative consequences for ESP learners with different sociological, cultural, and linguistics backgrounds. In



addition, they have to know that involving and integrating teachers and students' voices and experiences in all phases of ESP curriculum development can foster the quality of any educational curriculum. The second group of people who can use the findings of the study are ESP teachers. They should know that teaching in monolingual and multilingual contexts is not the same. Teaching to bilingual ESP learners is not as easy as teaching to monolingual language learners. They should bear in mind that individual, cultural, and linguistics variables are influential factors which should be given appropriate attention by teachers; otherwise, marginalized students and those with different L1 background might not find education and pedagogy fair and effective. Teachers should also take into account the gender issues particularly gender-linked differences into account while teaching male and female students with different age ranges and language background.

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