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Original Article

Designing and Validating a Model for Successful English Learning: How Socially-Mediated Testing Can Make a Difference

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Abstract

In this study, the investigator sought to explore the perceptions and attitudes of Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners towards the use of Socially Mediated Testing (SMT) in their English learning process. The primary aim was to identify the factors that significantly influence their learning experience when using SMT. The research process began with in-depth interviews of 50 EFL learners, aiming to gain a qualitative understanding of their thoughts and experiences with SMT. Based on the insights obtained from these interviews, the researcher developed a questionnaire tailored to capture the nuances of these learners' experiences. This questionnaire, consisting of 25 items, was then distributed to a larger sample of 475 EFL students. In the end, the researcher was able to identify four variables after using exploratory factor analysis to identify the factors. The 25-item questionnaire was then given to 785 EFL students, who chose each item on a Likert scale. The factor structure of the instrument was verified by the researcher using structural equation modeling (SEM). To determine if the suggested model matched the data, the researcher used the measurement with the best fit. The fit indices were estimated using the original EFA structure, which contained four factors and 25 elements. As a result, the researcher created a model that can be used as a respectable foundation for SMT research that will take place in Iran in the future, where such specific insights are unavailable in this politically distinct EFL setting.

Keywords: Learning, Socially-Mediated, Student, Testing, Vygotsky

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1. Introduction

English has become a globally recognized language, opening doors to various opportunities for those proficient in it. However, in Iran, traditional teaching methods, primarily the grammar-translation method, are still prevalent, resulting in students' inability to use English in real-life situations (Eslami-Rasekh & Valizadeh, 2004). Abbasian et al. (2017) also highlighted the inefficacy of the Iranian educational system in enhancing students' English proficiency to meet language needs.

Despite recent changes in textbooks and assessment methods, the pressure remains mainly on the students. The importance of understanding how words are remembered in second language acquisition (SLA), shifting focus from what is remembered to how it's remembered, was emphasized. Assessment, as defined by Alemi (2015), is a tool to support learning.

Vygotsky's (1978) theory of externally mediated activity suggested using external tools to achieve goals. He also introduced the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which measures a child's development progress compared to their potential development. However, despite the potential effectiveness of these teaching and assessment methods, many teachers resist change due to fear, and students also fear new evaluation methods (Hj Ramli et al., 2018).

This study investigated the potential of socially-mediated testing in fostering learning among Iranian EFL learners. The researcher aims to understand if this type of testing can improve scores and prepare students for real-life language use. The study concluded with a proposed model of socially-mediated testing for Iranian EFL learners, offering valuable insights for teachers and researchers interested in this field.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Background

In sociocultural theory, human behavior is realized through tools and sign systems, of which language is the most important. Vygotsky (1987) asserted that tools and languages are not fixed and take new forms in human history and cultural development; from then on, there is no longer any distinction between the languages used. He further argues that external social discourse is internalized through mediation; Thus, society is connected to the mind.

As Vygotsky believed in the relationship between society and mind, some researchers believed in the relationship between society and culture. Curry et al. (2017) stated that those who "know how to learn the self-directed language (SDLL) is autonomous language learner, and these learners can use cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social processes that govern learning" (p. 17). Mynard and Kato(2016) and Yamashita(2015) believed that social mediation is one of the most important roles in learner autonomy. Many researchers have found that the ability to interact socially mediated keeps learners motivated and engages them more in their learning. Language is socially mediated and context-dependent. It means your language use depends on your environment and the people who talk to you. If you are in a society that gives you the freedom to ask questions, you will be more likely to ask questions (and they will be more likely to answer them).

Many experts believe that Vygotsky's theory (SCT) is one of the critical theories that can affect teaching and learning. When students are in real situations with their classmates, and the teacher asks them questions, they help each other find the proper answer. This kind of cooperation helps all the students to learn better and prepare themselves to overcome the problems they may face in the future, and they can overcome them without helping their teachers or classmates (Murphy, 2017; Youjun & Xiaomei, 2022; Mohammadimoghadam, 2015; Mallahi & Hosseini, 2020; Derakhshan et al., 2020; Haq, 2016; Jung, 2018).

As experts believe, one of the essential factors in teaching is scaffolding. It means that when someone helps you get to a place you could not have gotten to on your own, but once you are there, you are just as good at doing it as someone who did not help (Daniels, 2007). In that way, it is similar to the ZPD. Daniels (2007) argued that the scaffolding approach studies how structure and organization between people differ rather than focusing on the internal bugs and errors causing those differences. Basically, it is about simplifying the role of the learner rather than the task. The scaffold concept is related to the Vygotskian concept of the Zone of Proximal Development.

Some of the scientists claimed that if you do not know something, you should be able to figure it out by asking questions and listening to the answers, and the basis of ZPD was the pilot of the idea of dynamic assessment (Feuerstein et al., 1980). ZPD is a way of trying a new idea without going through the normal testing process. Derakhshan et al. (2020) claimed that in dynamic assessment, the students work with a more experienced student or teacher, and it helps them to learn better.

2.2. Empirical Studies

Imamura (2018) carried out the research. This study investigates how a social-mediated interaction with an academic advisor helps learners to self-direct in the SAC of a university in Japan during self-directed learning. As they do this, an experienced teacher helps them figure out how to learn things (to learn). This study investigated how students feel about their interviews and how they feel about their learning (academic progress). It also looked at the social aspects of education, like "How do students feel about talking with someone about their thoughts and feelings?" and "How do students feel about their interactions with someone helping them learn?".

Law et al. (2019) sought to identify the effect of student recruitment and learning motivation on academic achievement in a college-level blended learning setting with social, pedagogical, and educational presentations as mediating factors. They assert that students can learn better when communicating with their teachers and classmates because strong students and teachers help others understand the subject better by giving more explanations or examples.

According to Jung (2018), alignment exercises for L2 grammar and vocabulary development during peer engagement provide educational advantages in both synchronous mobile-mediated communication and face-to-face settings. The results of this study show that students could improve both vocabulary and grammar in communicating with other people in real situations. They also could improve their self-esteem in communicating with other people.

Arceneaux and Dinu(2018) tried to investigate the effect of using social apps in improving students' English knowledge. The results of this study show that because the participants had communication with a native person, this helped them to improve their understanding of grammar and vocabulary. They could have good contact with their classmates and teachers in class, too.

As the previous studies showed, there is no study for designing and validating a model for SMT in learning. Then, the researcher decided to improve teaching, education, and evaluation, which is one of the essential parts of learning in every field.

Every pedagogical program emphasizes assessment. It keeps tabs on the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Moreover, it establishes the degree to which the curricular objectives have been accomplished by giving feedback on the students'

development. In reality, the purpose of assessment activities is to determine whether the actual learning outcomes align with the anticipated learning outcomes of the educational programs. Assessments are crucial in education and measure students' knowledge, skills, and abilities. There is a vast body of literature on assessments, including various types of assessments, their purposes, and their impact on learning outcomes. In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on socially mediated testing as a form of assessment that incorporates social interactions and collaboration among students.

One key aspect of assessments is their alignment with learning objectives. In their study titled "The Relationship Between Classroom Assessment Practices and Students' Learning Approaches," Brown and Knight (1994) found that assessments that align with desired learning outcomes can positively influence students' approaches to learning. This highlights the importance of designing assessments that encourage deep understanding and critical thinking.

Another essential consideration in assessment literature is the use of formative assessments. Black and Wiliam (1998) conducted a seminal review of formative assessment practices and found strong evidence supporting its positive impact on student learning (Sadeghi et al., 2017). Formative assessments provide ongoing feedback, allowing students to monitor their progress and make necessary adjustments in their learning strategies.

Socially mediated testing is an emerging approach that combines the benefits of collaborative learning with traditional assessment methods. In socially mediated testing, students work together in groups or pairs to solve problems or complete tasks while being assessed individually. This approach recognizes the social nature of learning and emphasizes the importance of peer interaction in knowledge construction.

A study by Slavin (1996) explored the effects of cooperative learning on achievement outcomes and found that students who engaged in cooperative activities outperformed those who worked individually. This suggests that incorporating social interactions into assessments can enhance student performance.

Furthermore, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory provides a theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between assessments and socially mediated testing. According to Vygotsky, learning occurs through social interactions within a cultural context (Moradian et al., 2019). Assessments that incorporate social interactions align with this

theory by promoting collaborative problem-solving, negotiation of meaning, and shared understanding among students.

According to Webber (2012, p. 202), assessment is "activities designed primarily to foster student learning." An essential component of the professional development of a language teacher is the design and usage of the assessment. The way teachers work and interact with more significant contextual and experiential elements becomes crucial as they are regularly involved in formative and summative assessments of the students in the pedagogical contexts (Crusan et al., 2016; Zhang et al.,2021).

In conclusion, the literature on assessments highlights the importance of aligning assessments with learning objectives and providing formative feedback to students. Socially mediated testing is an emerging approach that recognizes the social nature of learning and incorporates collaborative interactions into assessments. By promoting peer interaction, socially mediated testing can enhance student learning outcomes and align with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory.

This study examined the social context and aimed to design and validate a model of Socially-Mediated Testing fostering the learning of Iranian EFL learners to learn English. The necessity to understand these socially-mediated testing to foster language learning gets bolder when one investigates them in settings like the Islamic Republic of Iran, where English as a foreign language learning is vital in different parts of daily life among Iranian people. Thus, the researcher in this study designed to investigate the following research question:

Research Question: What is the model of socially-mediated testing fostering the learning for Iranian EFL learners to learn English?

3. Methods

This study follows a mixed method (exploratory design) to investigate a model of socially-mediated testing to foster learning among Iranian EFL Learners. It means that it is a mix of both qualitative and quantitative parts. It starts with collecting data from a few people and then confirms it by collecting data from many more people.

3.1. Design and Context of the Study

The group of participants in this study was 50 EFL learners (25 males and 25 females) studying or finished teaching English field at the Azad University of Qeshm in Hormozgan province in the south of Iran, Shiraz Azad University in Fars province, and Chabahar Maritime University in Sistan and Baluchistan province from 1390 till now. These students were undergraduate or postgraduate. All had studied English at university for at least ten years. The researcher wanted them to know if they passed any standard tests and sent a copy of their certificates, and 29 out of 50 said they had certificates in standardized tests such as IELTS, TOEFL, and GRE. The researcher used a standard placement test, showing that all the participants were at an advanced level. The ages of these participants ranged from 30 to 45 years. The sampling method was random sampling. The number of participants was confined to this as it felt that no new theme would likely emerge from more participants due to data saturation. The interviews of the qualitative phase were carried out in online form because they were in different cities in Iran. The 50 participants were interviewed via a Skype application. The researcher did this study in the autumn term of 1401-1402, and because most of the participants were far from the researcher, the study was done in an online format.

To see how well the results from the qualitative phase would apply to a larger, comparable group of people, the researcher decided to create a factor-based questionnaire. The researcher found it in that phase and gave it to other Iranian EFL learners. This researcher-constructed questionnaire needed to be piloted and validated before being assigned to the target population. Cochran's formula estimated a total number by estimating the variance of the original sample. As a result, by random sampling, the researcher chose 475 EFL learners to participate in piloting the questionnaire.

The participants in the next phase included 785 EFL learners studying or finishing their Ph.D. in teaching English at Azad University of Qeshm and Shiraz and Chabahar Maritime University in Sistan and Baluchistan according to Cochran's formula estimated a total number by estimating the variance of the original sample. The age range was from 29 to 37(M= 33). The sampling method was random sampling.

Table 1.
The frequency of the participants' gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	390	49.68	49.68	49.68
	Female	395	50.32	50.32	100
	Total	785	100	100	

Table 2.
The frequency of the participants' level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High intermediate	398	50.7	50.7	50.7
	Advanced	387	49.3	49.3	100
	Total	785	100	100	

3.2 Instruments

To address the various socially mediated testing issues that may underlie EFL students' English learning and to address the need for the qualitative nature of this study period, the researcher designed semi-structured interviews with the participants. To prepare open-ended questions, the researcher navigates through the social mediation literature and its context to gain a general understanding and progressively develops the interview process. The interview resulted in the design of some open-ended questions related to the specific relevance of the interview objectives. The researcher tried to find some SMT categories and, based on them, prepared a questionnaire.

3.3. Materials

The researcher, based on the findings of the interview, tried to prepare a questionnaire. The final questionnaire had two sections. The first section was about the respondent's personal information, such as their age, gender, education, and so on. The second section had 25 questions about the respondent's opinions. Participants answered the questions on a five-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” meaning neither agree nor disagree. So that the participants could easily understand the questions, the researcher wrote the items in their native Persian language. In the following, you can see the reliability and validity results of the questionnaire. The obtained Cronbach's alpha reaches a value of 0.804, which is reasonable.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

After the researcher prepares the final version of the interview guide, the next stage is to conduct the interviews. The researcher contacted the participants, and when the time came, the interviews took place online via the Skype app and recorded them. At the beginning of each interview, the interviewer thanked the participants who volunteered to participate in the project. The researcher then explained the purpose and different parts of the study to the respondents. The researcher used several icebreaker questions to induce a sense of comfort in the participants. The talks took place in the participants' native language (Persian), and the atmosphere was as friendly and relaxed as possible. The interviewer only interrupted the interlocutors when the researcher felt that they were deviating from the common thread. To convey a sense of participation in a conversation, interviewers sometimes use contrasting cues, such as nods, yes, and uh-huh. The interviewer would also take notes during the interview if necessary. Finally, the session ended with respondents asking if they had anything to add to their report and if their contributions would be appreciated again. To avoid putting the participants under time pressure that could impair their ability to function, the interviews were not time-limited.

The researcher designed the questionnaire based on an interview topic she could find. The researcher then validated the questionnaire. The main step of the research was to collect the opinions of the sample (N.785) by sending a verified online questionnaire to students studying at different levels of advancement in different fields of English study at the university in the Fall and Winter of 2020 - 2021 Academic Semester. Before starting the study, the researcher gave the participants a guide to answering the questions. The researcher informed them that their answers would be kept confidential and that the research results would only be used for educational purposes. Completing the questionnaire took 20 to 25 minutes.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedure

The researcher read the transcripts and reviewed them several times for familiarity. Then, the researcher put them into a computer program called MAXQDA. Each interview had a specific label for the person conducting it and where it occurred. Once the data was organized, the second step was to make it smaller by only keeping the essential parts, which include open coding, axis coding, and selective coding. After all codes for each data set were

identified, the researcher reduced the code list to a smaller list of categories using a continuous comparison method. Selective encryption was the final part of encryption and mitigation and has already begun. Then, experimenters read between the lines, draw connections or patterns between stripes, and combine them into major themes regarding affiliated propositions and literature.

The process of checking the questionnaire involved calculating the internal consistency of the instruments' particulars, reliability, and construct-related validity to see whether these instruments measure the constructs they claim they are measuring. The researcher used Cronbach's alpha to check the reliability of the entire questionnaire. As a result, Cronbach's alpha was able to reach 0.804, which was acceptable.

The main goal of this study was to develop a model of how people learn a language and how it relates to their environment. SEM is a type of model that uses mathematics to answer questions about how things are related. A program called LISREL was used to analyze the data from this study.

4. Results

After analyzing the data from the interview, the researcher could find four themes with 25 subcategories. The main themes extracted included the positive points of socially mediated testing (9 items). This factor refers to the fact that some things always make an exam better than before and make students feel more comfortable when they take an exam. The next factor was the negative points of socially mediated testing (7 items). When the researcher had some interviews with the participants, some told some factors that show this exam has some dark points. The third subcategory of SMT is learning measurement. In this subcategory, seven factors show the effect of learning measurement in this exam. All these factors can help teachers choose whether to use this exam. The last subcategory in SMT is the teacher's goal. When teachers come to class, they have prepared themselves for this lesson before. Perhaps they are teaching, maybe they are taking a test, or perhaps they are reviewing a subject. Achievement goal orientation is how people decide what to do and why they do it (Ames, 1992; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Shohamy,2020; Eun,2019; Erbil,2020). Based on these results, the researcher tried to prepare a questionnaire to measure the effectiveness of SMT on learning. Finally, the questionnaire included 25 qualified items. Then, the researcher measures the reliability and validity of the items.

Table 3.
Item-Total Statistics for Total Factors

Items	*N* of Items	Cronbach'sAlpha
Positive	9	.848
Negative	7	.838
Learning, measurement	7	.776
Goals of teacher	2	.455
Cronbach's alpha	25	.804

The researcher also checked the rigor of inter-correlations among the items. This issue must be addressed by looking at the correlation matrix provided by the SPSS and looking for coefficients of more than 0.3. in this study, all the items could reach enough coefficients larger than 0.3 except for one item, which was discarded. Table 4 shows the results of the KMO and Bartlett tests. The correlation matrix based on KMO and Bartlett's test shows the researcher has evidence for matrix factorization.

Table 4.
KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.7702
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3959.757
	df	325
	Sig.	.000

As shown in the table above, the KMO and the significance of the Bartlett sphericity test are acceptable for this questionnaire. KMO was 0.7702, which is greater than 0.6, and the significance of Bartlett's test was less than 0.5 (Sig = .000). These results confirmed the usefulness of the data contained in the questionnaire.

Table 5 displays the results of the Total Variance Explained. In general, the results reflect a sort of certainty among elicited responses that represents the commonality of perception among the respondents concerning the socially mediated testing questionnaire that displays a descending loading trajectory moving from the high end (6.810) to the low end (.047).

Table 5.
Total Variance Explained

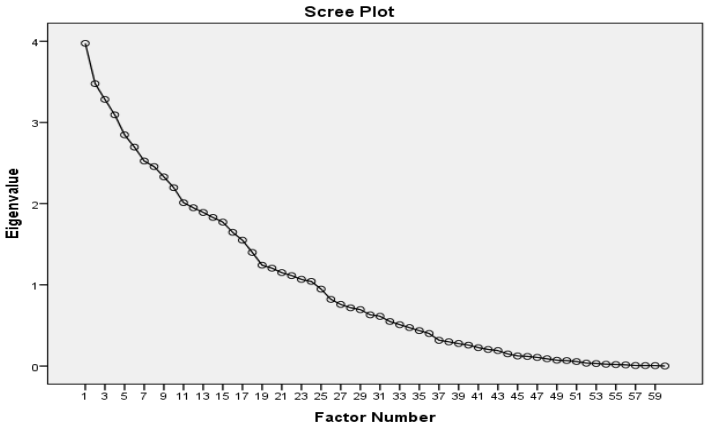
	Initial Eigenvalues		
Factor	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.810	26.193	26.193
2	3.589	13.805	39.998
3	2.308	8.877	48.875
4	1.764	6.784	55.660
5	1.469	5.651	61.310
6	1.104	4.247	65.558

7	1.009	3.882	69.440
8	.925	3.558	72.998
9	.907	3.489	76.487
10	.813	3.129	79.615
11	.788	3.033	82.648
12	.682	2.623	85.271
13	.546	2.102	87.373
14	.538	2.069	89.442
15	.513	1.975	91.417
16	.435	1.674	93.090
17	.371	1.426	94.516
18	.293	1.125	95.641
19	.265	1.019	96.661
20	.203	.781	97.442
21	.166	.640	98.082
22	.144	.554	98.636
23	.125	.481	99.116
24	.112	.432	99.548
25	.070	.271	99.819
26	.047	.181	100.000

Figure 1 displays the results of factor loading and reflects participants' high interest and positive perceptions of the socially mediated testing questionnaire at the high end of the plot compared to their perceptions of the socially mediated testing questionnaire at the low end.

Figure 1.

The Screen Plot of the Factors of the Study



The researcher used a software program known as Monte Carlo, which "compares the size of eigenvalues with those of a randomly generated data set of the same size" (Pallant, 2007). Sobol (2018) claimed that this program could help all the researchers to check their data. Those factors are retained whose eigenvalues are greater than those obtained from the random data set. After running Monte Carlo, these results were produced.

Table 6.

Actual Eigenvalues and Their Corresponding Values from Parallel Analysis

Component number	Eigenvalue from PCA	Criterion value from parallel analysis	Decision
1	5.186	1.2713	Accept
2	2.391	1.1746	Accept
3	1.760	1.0882	Accept
4	1.566	1.0285	Accept
5	1.358	.09690	Accept
6	1.235	.08931	Accept
7	1.120	.08326	Accept

The results confirmed the findings of the first step regarding retaining seven factors since, according to Table 6, the actual eigenvalues of these seven factors were greater than the criterion values from the parallel analysis.

The last step in analyzing data was to rotate the factors so that each item had the same amount of importance for each factor. Table 7 summarizes the results of factor rotation and item loadings.

Table 7.

Rotated Component Matrix

	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m23	.665						
m24	.653						
m4	.648		.333				
m19	.609						
m2	.478					.420	
m17	.538						
m22		.721					
m25		.669					-.311
m14	.412	.492	.672				
m9	.388		.633				
m13			.483			.350	
m15		.355	.451				
m11				.847			
m5				.745			
m12				.640			
m7					.871		
m8					.855		
m10						.732	
m6						.582	
m16		.397				.441	
m18							.761
m3		.335					.547
m20							.512
m1							.824
m21							.750

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

As mentioned in Table 7, the items in this questionnaire all had the same weight on the same thing, which means that the way we asked them, the way we measured it, and the items themselves were correct. In general, the results of the pilot study accepted the reliability and validity of the questionnaire designed by the researcher.

The researcher tried to design and validate a model of socially mediated testing factors that can influence Iranian EFL learners to learn English. The researcher then prepared the interview and used exploratory factor analysis to find four issues that might have an impact and measured them against indicators or observed variables. The researcher used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to prepare for structural equation modeling (SEM). CFA shows for confirmatory factor analysis: In this study, the researcher used a computer program called LISREL to test four different models that can be used to describe the data (Molenaar, 2019; Qiu & Qi, 2020; Nam et al., 2018).

Figure 2.

T-values Diagram

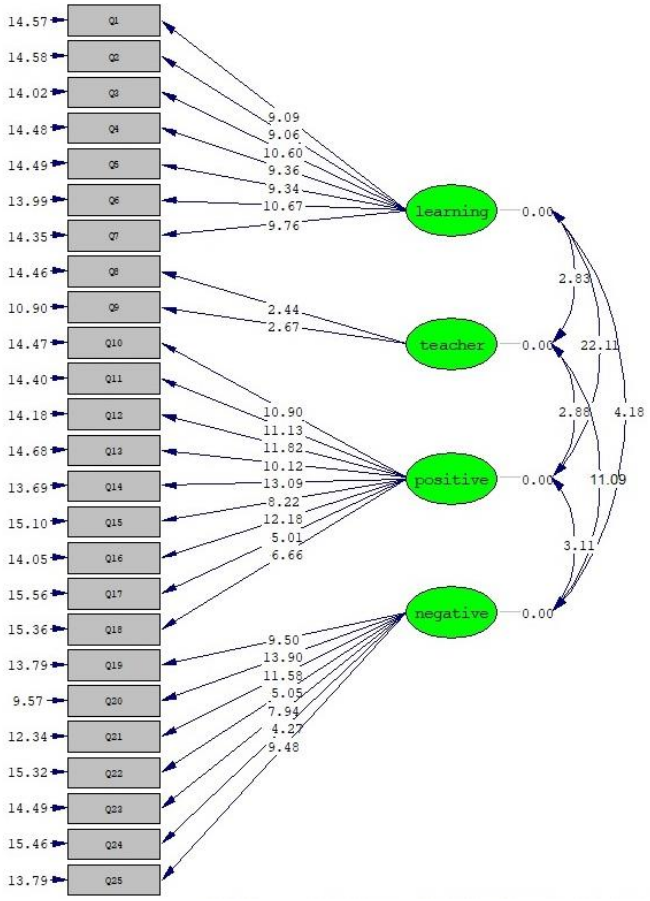


Table 8 shows the required fit indicators that had to be checked to show the fit of the models. These indices included RMSEA (Error Mean Squared Approximation), Chi-Square/df (Relative Chi-Square), SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Residual), GFI (Goodness-of-Fit Index), NFI (Standardized Goodness-of- fit index), CFI (comparative adjustment index), IFI (incremental adjustment index), and RFI (relative adjustment index).

Table 8.
The Obtained Fit Indices

Fit indices	RMSEA	Chi-square/*df*	*SRMR*	*GFI*	*NFI*	*CFI*	*IFI*	*RFI*
Value	0.031	1.297	0.046	0.92	0.94	0.97	0.97	0.93

Many researchers (such as Jacobucci et al., 2019) have preferred to use different index types to check the accuracy of the model, as this strategy can help overcome the limitations of each index type. The researcher examined how well the model fits the data and how close it is to data reported in the past. For the RMSEA, according to Dash and Paul (2021), experts generally agree that 0.07 is a good number to use. However, in this study, the value was 0.031, less than 0.07. The chi-square test for this model was smaller (1.297) than the upper bound of 2.00 given by Ullman and Bentler (2003). Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) is a number that indicates how well a model fits the data it is designed to represent. The model fits the data well if the GFI is greater than 0.90. If it is less than 0.90, the model does not fit the data well (Shevlin and Miles, 1998).In this study, the GFI was 0.92. The following table (9) summarizes the values obtained for each index and the acceptable thresholds.

Table 9.
The Obtained and the Acceptable Fit Indices

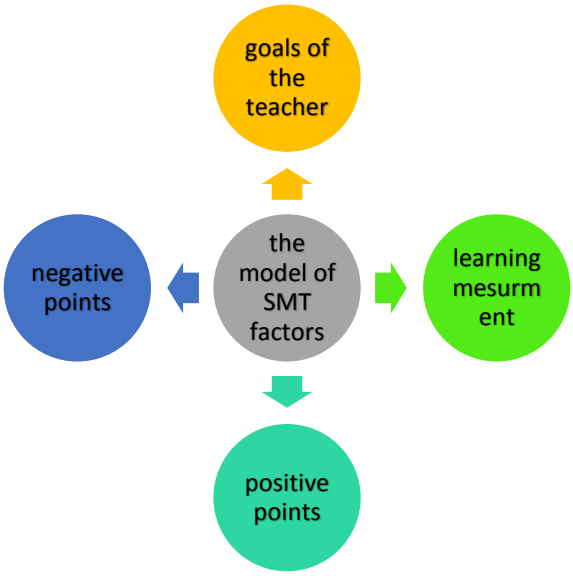
Fit indices	RMSEA	Chi square/*df*	*SRMR*	*GFI*	*NFI*	*CFI*	*IFI*	*RFI*
The obtained Value	0.031	1.297	0.046	0.92	0.94	0.97	0.97	0.93
The acceptable value	≤0.07	≤ 5	≤0.08	≥ 0.9	≥ 0.9	≥ 0.9	≥ 0.9	≥ 0.9

5. Discussion

Various statistics were calculated to determine how well the model fits the data. These statistics indicate that the model is a good fit for the data and can be valid for future empirical research. As a result, the final model of SMT factors that contribute to improving the learning of Iranian EFL learners can be presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3.

The Final Model of the SMT Factors That Contribute to Improving the Learning of Iranian EFL Learners



One of the most critical parts of teaching is evaluation. At this level, the teacher and the students can understand whether teaching and learning about the topic were successful. The teacher can decide the student's future, class, and course based on the evaluation results. It can also show the strong and weak points of the teaching and learning during the sessions. In the following part, some theories directly or indirectly emphasize cooperation to learn better.

1. Social Constructivism: This theory, proposed by Lev Vygotsky, emphasizes the role of social interaction in learning. According to this theory, learners construct knowledge through interactions with others. In the context of socially mediated testing, learners can benefit from collaborative activities and discussions that promote language acquisition and understanding.

2. Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): Also proposed by Vygotsky, the ZPD refers to the gap between a learner's current level of knowledge and their potential level of development with guidance from a more knowledgeable other. By incorporating socially mediated testing, where learners receive feedback and support from peers or teachers during assessment activities, the ZPD can effectively enhance language learning.

3. Sociocultural Theory: Developed by Lev Vygotsky and expanded upon by his followers, sociocultural theory emphasizes the influence of cultural and social factors on cognitive development. In the context of socially mediated testing, this theory suggests that

learners' language acquisition can be enhanced through participation in authentic social interactions that reflect real-life communication situations.

4. Cooperative Learning: This instructional approach promotes collaborative learning among students in small groups. By engaging in group activities during socially mediated testing sessions, Iranian EFL learners can benefit from peer interaction, negotiation of meaning, and shared responsibility for learning outcomes.

5. Social Presence Theory: This theory focuses on creating a sense of community and connection among online learners through social interaction. When applied to socially mediated testing in an online or blended learning environment for Iranian EFL learners, it suggests that incorporating opportunities for communication and collaboration can enhance motivation and engagement while fostering language acquisition.

6. Self-Determination Theory (SDT): SDT emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in promoting intrinsic motivation and optimal learning outcomes. The model can foster a positive learning environment and promote English language acquisition by designing socially mediated testing activities that allow Iranian EFL learners to take ownership of their learning, feel competent in their language skills, and connect with others.

As mentioned above, some theories emphasize cooperation to learn and help students pass their exams better.

McLeod (2020) found that collaborative study reduces exam stress and improves scores. Myyry and Joutsenvirta (2015) emphasized the importance of authentic assessment methods, while Daneshfar and Moharami (2018) argued for assessments that prepare students for real-world problem-solving. Newman & Latifi (2021), Infante & Poehner (2019), and Leite et al. (2022) highlighted the benefits of peer collaboration in problem-solving. Struyven et al. (2005) and Guligers et al. (2006) found a link between cognitive skills application and test performance. Irshad et al. (2021), Torre et al. (2020), and Bakhoda & Shabani (2019) discovered students' preference for assessments that align with their learning style and handwriting over typing. Rahimi and Karkami (2015) found that socially mediated testing (SMT) improves language learning. Khodabandeh and Naseri (2020) showed that social media integration fosters community in language learning. Bahador and Mofrad (2020) emphasized the role of social interaction and a supportive classroom

environment in language learning. Gholami et al. (2017) found that online collaborative testing improves vocabulary acquisition.

To the author's knowledge, no mixed-method research has been carried out in Iran about SMT and presents a model based on the findings in qualitative and quantitative phases through structural equation modeling. The results of this study can shed some light on learning in foreign contexts and how it can differ from English as a second language. There are many subjects in the tests and a new test method that other countries use, but in Iran, teachers don't use it, and they are not familiar with these new test forms in the education system, like "universities and schools." The study's results could also be used directly and indirectly by the students' parents because they can show them what they could learn in school or university and help them make decisions for the future.

6. Conclusion

In this study, the researcher aimed to design and validate a model of socially mediated testing to foster the learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) among Iranian learners. Socially mediated testing refers to integrating social interaction and collaboration into the testing process to enhance language learning outcomes. The design of our model involved incorporating various elements such as group work, peer feedback, and collaborative problem-solving tasks into the testing process. These elements were intended to create an environment that promotes active engagement, critical thinking, and meaningful interactions among learners. The researcher conducted a study with a sample of Iranian EFL learners to validate our model. The participants were divided into two groups: one group received traditional individual testing, while the other group experienced socially mediated testing. Both groups underwent pre-test and post-test assessments to measure their language proficiency levels. The results of the study indicated that the group exposed to socially mediated testing showed significantly higher improvement in their English language skills than the group that underwent traditional individual testing. This finding suggests incorporating social interaction and collaboration into the testing process can foster language learning among Iranian EFL learners.

Furthermore, qualitative data collected through interviews and observations revealed that learners in the socially mediated testing group reported increased motivation, engagement, and enjoyment during the learning process. They also expressed positive

attitudes towards working collaboratively and receiving peer feedback. These findings support the notion that socially mediated testing can be valuable for promoting language learning among Iranian EFL learners. This model offers an innovative approach beyond traditional assessment methods, emphasizing social interaction and collaborative learning experiences.

Further research is needed to explore its applicability in different educational contexts and with diverse learner populations. In the following, you can see some suggestions for further research:

1.Examine the potential benefits and challenges of incorporating gamification elements within socially mediated testing for Iranian EFL learners. Investigate how gamified activities enhance motivation, engagement, and overall learning outcomes.

2.Explore the potential cultural implications and challenges of implementing socially mediated testing for Iranian EFL learners. Investigate how cultural factors influence learner participation, engagement, and learning outcomes.

3.Examine the role of teacher facilitation in socially mediated testing for Iranian EFL learners. Investigate how teachers can effectively guide and support students' learning experiences through social media platforms.

4.Investigate the long-term effects of socially mediated testing on Iranian EFL learners' language proficiency development beyond immediate learning outcomes. Analyze whether these approaches contribute to sustainable language acquisition over time.

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