Research Article
# Diverging Perspectives: Comparing Iranian High School Teachers and Curriculum Designers' Perceptions of Multicultural Curriculum Components in ELT Textbooks

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## Abstract

This study examines the integration of multicultural curriculum (MC) components—objectives, content, methods, and evaluation—into Iran's Vision series English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks, with a focus on the perceptions of high school teachers and curriculum designers. A qualitative content analysis of the textbooks revealed limited multicultural themes, including superficial coverage of global cultures, underrepresented Iranian diversity, and minimal engagement with social justice issues, suggesting a gap in culturally responsive content. The quantitative analysis, involving a yes/no questionnaire administered to 26 teachers (10 males, 16 females) and 38 curriculum designers (26 males, 12 females), using descriptive and inferential statistics, including independent samples t-tests, showed significant differences across all MC components. The teachers consistently reported lower levels of multicultural integration compared to the designers, highlighting a significant disparity between the design intentions and classroom realities. Pedagogically, this study underscores the need for professional development programs that equip teachers with culturally responsive teaching strategies aligned with curriculum objectives. Enhancing teacher training and curriculum design to address multicultural components more effectively can foster students' intercultural competence and critical awareness, preparing them for meaningful global engagement. Additionally, curriculum developers should consider integrating practical guidance within textbooks to support teachers in implementing inclusive methodologies.

*Keywords:* curriculum perceptions, English language teaching, Multicultural education, Textbook analysis

**Introduction**

In a globalized world, English Language Teaching (ELT) demands more than linguistic proficiency; it requires cultural fluency and an appreciation of diversity (Kramsch, 2017). Multicultural education theory provides a framework for embedding inclusivity, equity, and social justice into curricula, ensuring that diverse cultural perspectives enrich the learning experience (Banks, 2016). In Iran, where English is taught as a foreign language within a centralized educational system, ELT textbooks like the Vision series play a pivotal role in shaping students' linguistic and cultural understanding (Farhady & Hedayati, 2009). However, the extent to which these materials reflect multicultural curriculum (MC) components—objectives, content, methods, and evaluation—remains underexplored.

Multicultural education, as conceptualized by Banks (2016), emerged from mid-20th-century social justice movements and seeks to reform educational systems by valuing diversity across race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status (Sleeter & Grant, 2017). In the ELT context, this translates into designing materials and practices that connect learners' cultural identities with the target language, fostering intercultural competence (Byram, 2008). However, traditional ELT approaches often exhibit Anglo-centric biases, prioritizing dominant English-speaking cultures and potentially marginalizing local contexts (Pennycook, 2017; Holliday, 2013). Phillipson's (1992) notion of linguistic imperialism critiques the imposition of hegemonic norms through English, a concern relevant to Iran's nationalized curriculum (Abdolhay et al., 2023).

Previous studies on multicultural curricula in ELT underscore their potential and challenges. For instance, Gay (2002) and Ladson-Billings (1995) highlight culturally responsive teaching (CRT) and culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) as approaches that enhance student engagement and motivation, particularly for diverse learners (Gay, 2021; Caingcoy, 2023). These studies demonstrate that CRT fosters positive social relationships and reduces alienation (Davis, 2022; Snijders et al., 2020), aligning with Kramsch's (2017) argument that culturally relevant ELT deepens learner engagement.

In Iran, centralized curricula tend to prioritize national goals over cultural diversity, which presents significant challenges for teachers attempting to adapt instructional materials to more inclusive ends (Farhady & Hedayati, 2009; Miller et al., 2021). Abdolhay et al. (2023) specifically investigated the Vision series

textbooks used in Iranian high schools, identifying a tension between the promotion of global English and the preservation of local identities. They proposed content analysis as a systematic approach to evaluate the incorporation of multicultural elements within these educational resources. Similarly, Sercu (2005) and Byram (2008) conceptualize multicultural English language teaching (ELT) as a pathway to developing intercultural competence, emphasizing its potential to move learners toward ethnorelativism—a developmental stage described in Bennett's (2017) intercultural sensitivity model. Collectively, this body of literature underscores the transformative possibilities of multicultural education in ELT while also highlighting enduring structural barriers within curriculum frameworks.

Despite growing acknowledgment of multicultural education's importance in fostering global competence, Iran's centrally administered curriculum remains heavily oriented towards national identity, often marginalizing diverse cultural perspectives. This policy orientation creates a disconnect between the curriculum's theoretical objectives and the realities encountered by teachers in the classroom, thereby questioning the efficacy of current ELT materials in addressing multiculturalism. Motivated by these concerns, the present study aims to critically examine how multicultural components are perceived by both curriculum designers and teachers, as well as to assess the extent to which these elements are integrated within the mandated Vision series textbooks.

Preliminary evidence suggests a potential misalignment between the theoretical goals of curriculum designers and the practical realities faced by teachers, who serve as key implementers (Miller et al., 2021). This study addresses a critical gap by investigating whether Iranian high school teachers and curriculum designers differ significantly in their perceptions of MC incorporation into ELT textbooks as well as examining the extent of multicultural content in the Vision series. The research questions are:

1. What multicultural themes and representations are evident in the content of the Vision series ELT textbooks? (Qualitative)
2. Is there any significant difference between Iranian high school teachers and curriculum designers in terms of their perceptions toward the incorporation of the components of the MC model into the existing ELT textbooks? (Quantitative)

## Method

### Research Design

A mixed-methods design was adopted to qualitatively compare teachers' and curriculum designers' perceptions while contextualizing the findings with the qualitative insights from textbook content analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2023). This approach enabled a robust examination of the perceptual differences across the MC model components and provided a deeper understanding of how multiculturalism is represented (or not) in the textbooks.

### Participants

The study centered on two essential participant groups. The first group consisted of 38 curriculum designers (26 males, 12 females) who were members of the Iranian Curriculum Studies Association (ICSA), a prominent organization committed to the advancement of curriculum research and development in Iran. The participants were recruited utilizing a snowball sampling technique (Parker et al, 2019), which commenced by engaging initial members of the ICSA, who subsequently referred other qualified colleagues. This methodology enabled access to experienced curriculum designers who are actively involved in educational reform initiatives. The second participant group included 26 high school English language teachers (10 males and 16 females) selected from various schools throughout Gilan province. These teachers were identified through convenience sampling (Etikan et al., 2016), primarily considering their availability. Their involvement was instrumental in garnering practical insights into the presence and implementation of multicultural curriculum components within English language classrooms and textbooks.

### Materials and Instruments

A yes/no questionnaire was developed to evaluate the perceptions of multicultural curriculum (MC) components—objectives, content, methods, and evaluation—in the Vision series textbooks. The binary format was chosen for clarity and ease of quantitative analysis (Fowler, 2014). The items were based on a thorough review of multicultural education literature and validated by subject-matter experts to ensure content validity.

The Vision series, the official English Language Teaching (ELT) textbook for Iranian high schools, was the focus of this study. In the qualitative phase, all volumes were analyzed using content analysis, which included a detailed review of both textual and visual elements—such as dialogues, reading passages, cultural

illustrations, and activities—to identify and classify representations of cultural diversity and inclusivity.

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated, with values exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.75 indicating satisfactory internal consistency and reliability of the instrument (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Furthermore, the instrument's construct validity was assessed via Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), employing Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to uncover the underlying factor structure and confirm that questionnaire items appropriately measured the intended multicultural curriculum dimensions (Field, 2018).

**Procedures**

The data collection process involved quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the multicultural curriculum components in the Iranian ELT textbooks. The quantitative data were gathered through a structured yes/no questionnaire distributed among two participant groups: high school English teachers and curriculum designers. The questionnaire aimed to assess their perceptions of the incorporation of multicultural curriculum components—objectives, content, methods, and evaluation—within the Vision series textbooks.

To collect the responses, a combination of in-person and electronic methods was employed, ensuring accessibility for all participants. The teachers were recruited from various high schools in Gilan province, while curriculum designers were selected from the Iranian Curriculum Studies Association (ICSA). The survey was conducted over two weeks, with participants providing informed consent before responding to the questionnaire.

For the qualitative phase, a systematic content analysis of the Vision series textbooks was conducted. This process entailed identifying and categorizing multicultural themes based on textual and visual elements. The researchers examined textbook dialogues, reading passages, images, and activities to assess representations of cultural diversity, inclusion, and global perspectives.

The data collection phase was structured to maintain objectivity and reliability. To ensure consistency, the questionnaire was piloted with a small group of educators before full implementation. Similarly, the qualitative data were cross-validated by independent coders to minimize subjectivity in identifying themes. These measures contributed to a robust dataset that informed the subsequent analysis.

To analyze the qualitative data, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis approach, widely used in educational research for systematically identifying and interpreting patterns within qualitative data, was used as follows:

1. Familiarization with Data: The researchers thoroughly read all volumes of the Vision series to develop an overall understanding of their cultural representations.
2. Coding: Specific elements such as textbook dialogues, reading passages, images, and activities were systematically coded based on their alignment with multicultural themes (Banks, 2016). The codes were assigned to the excerpts who illustrated the aspects of cultural diversity, gender representation, global perspectives, and social issues (Sercu, 2005).
3. Theme Development: The coded data were grouped into broader themes to identify the patterns related to multicultural education, ensuring that each theme captured a distinct aspect of cultural representation (Gay, 2018).
4. Reviewing Themes: The themes were refined, cross-validated, and checked for coherence and relevance, ensuring that they accurately represented the data (Kramsch, 2017).
5. Defining and Naming Themes: Each theme was clearly defined, ensuring that it provided meaningful insights into the extent of multicultural integration in the textbooks (Ladson-Billings, 1995).
6. Reporting Findings: The final themes were presented using illustrative examples from the textbooks, providing qualitative depth to the analysis (Gay, 2021).

To ensure trustworthiness and credibility, multiple researchers independently coded the data, and discrepancies were resolved through intercoder reliability checks (Creswell & Clark, 2023). This process minimized subjectivity and researcher bias, enhancing the validity of the qualitative findings.

The quantitative data collected from the structured yes/no questionnaire were processed and analyzed using SPSS to ensure accuracy and reliability (Field, 2018). The analysis followed a structured process that included descriptive statistics, assumption testing, and inferential analysis.

Descriptive statistics were computed, including means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages, to summarize the participants' perceptions regarding the incorporation of MC components – objectives, content, methods, and evaluation – in the Vision series textbooks. This provided an overview of trends in the teachers' and curriculum designers' responses. Before conducting inferential tests, the dataset was assessed for normality and homogeneity of variance, essential conditions for

parametric statistical analysis. Skewness, kurtosis, and the Shapiro-Wilk test were applied to determine whether the data were normally distributed (Byrne, 2016). These tests ensured that the dataset met the assumptions required for parametric statistical analyses. Levene's test was used to confirm that response variances across the two groups were approximately equal, a necessary assumption for independent samples t-tests (Hair et al., 2019).

To compare the perceptions of teachers and curriculum designers regarding MC integration in ELT textbooks, the study employed an Independent Samples t-test to examine the differences in mean scores between the teachers and curriculum designers on each MC component (Banks, 2016). A statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) would indicate a perceptual gap between the two groups.

Furthermore, a One-Sample t-test was used to compare participants' mean scores against predefined test values, allowing an assessment of whether their perceptions significantly deviated from expected benchmarks (Field, 2018). Effect Size Measurement (Cohen's d) was also calculated to determine the magnitude of the differences between the two groups, providing insight into the practical significance of any observed discrepancies (Creswell & Clark, 2023).

To ensure statistical validity, the dataset was cross-checked for outliers, and any anomalies were addressed before finalizing the analysis. The inferential analysis provided a rigorous evaluation of how perceptions differed between the teachers and curriculum designers regarding multicultural curriculum implementation.

To integrate the findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses, a triangulation strategy was adopted, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of multicultural content in ELT textbooks (Gay, 2021). While the statistical tests provided numerical evidence of the perceptual differences between the teachers and curriculum designers, the thematic content analysis contextualized these differences by identifying specific multicultural elements (or their absence) in the Vision series textbooks (Banks, 2016). This mixed-methods approach provided a holistic evaluation, capturing both the perceptions of key stakeholders and the actual content of ELT materials. The integration of these two analytical phases strengthened the study's conclusions, ensuring that the findings were both statistically valid and qualitatively rich (Creswell & Clark, 2023).

## Results

This section presents the analyses and findings regarding the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study to address the research questions. The qualitative

content analysis of the Vision series textbooks (RQ1) revealed several themes related to multicultural representation, highlighting significant gaps in the inclusivity and comprehensiveness of the materials. These themes include the limited representation of Iranian cultural diversity, a focus on general global culture without deep engagement, the superficial integration of social issues, and the reinforcement of traditional gender roles. Each of these findings underscores the need for a more balanced and inclusive approach to curriculum development.

One of the most prominent issues identified in the analysis is the limited representation of Iranian cultural diversity. While the textbooks do include some references to Iranian culture, they largely present a homogeneous and standardized Persian identity, failing to capture the country's rich ethnic and regional diversity. Iran is home to various ethnic groups, such as Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Lurs, Baluchis, and Arabs, each with distinct traditions, dialects, and customs (Abdeli Soltan Ahmadi & Sadeghi, 2016). However, these cultural variations are not comprehensively represented in the materials. Moreover, since the Vision textbooks are localized and primarily centered on Iranian culture, they do not sufficiently expose learners to the real-world target language culture they are studying. This limitation restricts students' opportunities to develop intercultural competence, which is a key aspect of second language acquisition (Byram, 2008).

In addition to the underrepresentation of the Iranian cultural diversity, the Vision series also demonstrates a strong emphasis on general global culture without providing critical analysis or meaningful connections to local contexts. The textbooks introduce customs and traditions from various countries, yet these representations tend to be superficial and neutral, lacking discussions on cultural nuances, historical context, or critical reflection. This aligns with concerns about linguistic imperialism and the dominance of Anglo-centric perspectives in English language teaching (Phillipson, 1992). Given this finding, it appears that the textbook developers in Iran have overlooked the cultural and normative aspects of EFL, despite its recognized importance in second language instruction (McGrath, 2002). Furthermore, they have also neglected the perspective of English as an international language (EIL), which emphasizes the need for ELT materials to be culturally inclusive and globally relevant.

Another critical issue identified in the content analysis is the superficial integration of social issues. While topics such as environmental concerns, health, and cultural awareness are incorporated into the textbooks, these discussions often lack depth and do not explicitly address issues of social justice, equity, or critical

societal challenges. Social topics are generally presented broadly and neutrally, focusing on everyday global themes such as places, travel, and culture, rather than engaging students in meaningful discussions on diversity, discrimination, inequality, or ethical dilemmas. This omission is significant, as language learning is not only about linguistic proficiency, but also about understanding the sociocultural dimensions of communication (Kramsch, 2017). By failing to include critical perspectives on social issues, the textbooks miss an opportunity to foster critical thinking, cultural awareness, and global citizenship among learners.

Finally, the analysis found evidence of gender bias in both linguistic and pictorial content, reflecting disparities in visibility, firstness, gendered vocabulary, and occupational roles. This aligns with previous studies (Sleeter & Grant, 2017; Sunderland, 2000) highlighting gender bias in ELT materials, where textbook content tends to reinforce traditional gender norms rather than promote gender inclusivity and equality. Given the significant role that textbooks play in shaping learners' perceptions of social roles, it is essential to revise educational materials to include balanced and equitable gender representation.

To answer the quantitative research question (RQ2), the opinions of the high school teachers and curriculum designers were examined through a yes/no questionnaire related to the four components of the MC model. Table 1 illustrates the result of the normality test.

**Table 1**

*Tests of Normality on the Scores*

| | | Skewness | | Kurtosis | | Shapiro-Wilk | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Statistics | Std. Error | Statistics | Std. Error | Statistics | Df | Sig. |
| Teachers | Objective | -.210 | .456 | -.563 | .887 | .938 | 26 | .123 |
| | Content | .487 | .456 | -.465 | .887 | .850 | 26 | .091 |
| | Method | -.053 | .456 | -.375 | .887 | .922 | 26 | .055 |
| | Evaluation | -.074 | .456 | -.524 | .887 | .715 | 26 | .121 |
| | Total | .365 | .456 | -.193 | .887 | .933 | 26 | .089 |
| Curriculum Designers | Objective | -.552 | .383 | -.989 | .750 | .854 | 38 | .067 |
| | Content | -.774 | .383 | -.485 | .750 | .744 | 38 | .088 |
| | Method | -.773 | .383 | -.918 | .750 | .730 | 38 | .103 |
| | Evaluation | -.608 | .383 | -.756 | .750 | .768 | 38 | .80 |
| | Total | -.688 | .383 | -.165 | .750 | .919 | 38 | .209 |

The results for the normality test in Table 1 demonstrate that the ratio of skewness and kurtosis is lower than ± 1, indicating the normality of the data (Byrne, 2016). Based on the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test, the assumption of homogeneity of variance is also met as the sign values are greater than .05 (Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics of Each Component for the Two Groups*

|  |  | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teachers | Objective | 26 | 4.80 | 1.29 | .254 |
|  | Content | 26 | 3.34 | .93 | .183 |
|  | Method | 26 | 4.11 | 1.10 | .217 |
|  | Evaluation | 26 | 2.69 | .54 | .107 |
|  | Total | 26 | 14.96 | 2.40 | .472 |
| Curriculum | Objective | 38 | 6.60 | 1.34 | .218 |
| Designers | Content | 38 | 4.42 | .68 | .110 |
|  | Method | 38 | 6.36 | .78 | .127 |
|  | Evaluation | 38 | 3.34 | .70 | .114 |
|  | Total | 38 | 22.10 | 8.34 | 1.353 |

Table 2 displays the results of descriptive statistics of each component for the two groups. According to the mean scores, the teachers and curriculum designers have different perspectives about each component. To determine whether the teachers' perspectives about each component were different from the test values, a one-sample t-test was performed, and the results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Results of One-Sample T-Test for the Teachers' Response*

| Components | N | df | T | Test value | Mean Diff. | Sig.(2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Objective | 8 | 25 | -59.739 | 20 | -15.19 | .000 |
| Content | 5 | 25 | -30.813 | 9 | -5.65 | .000 |
| Method | 7 | 25 | -59.33 | 17 | -12.88 | .000 |
| Evaluation | 4 | 25 | -40.000 | 7 | -4.30 | .000 |
| Total | 24 | 25 | -80.548 | 53 | -38.03 | .000 |

As indicated in Table 3, the teachers' mean score ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 1.29$) on the objective component is significantly lower than the test value (20), $t(25) = -59.739$, $p = .000$. As for the content, the result shows that the teachers' mean score ($M = 3.34$, $SD = .93$) is significantly lower than the test value (9), $t(25) = -$

30.813, $p = .000$. The results for the teachers' perspective about method also reveal that the teachers' mean score ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.10$) is significantly lower than the test value (17), $t (25) = -59.33$, $p = .000$. Concerning the evaluation component, the result shows a significant difference between the teachers' mean score ($M = 2.69$, $SD = .54$) and the test value (7), $t (25) = -40.00$, $p = .000$. Taking into account the results for the total answer of the teachers on the questionnaire also demonstrates that the teachers' mean score ($M = 14.96$, $SD = 2.40$) is significantly lower than the test value (53), $t (25) = -80.548$, $p = .000$.

Additionally, a one-sample t-test was performed to determine whether the mean scores of curriculum designers differed from the test values. Table 4 represents the results.

**Table 4**

*Results of One-Sample T-Test for the Curriculum Designers' Response*

| Components | N | df | T | Test value | Mean Diff. | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Objective | 8 | 37 | -61.324 | 20 | -13.39 | .000 |
| Content | 5 | 37 | -41.324 | 9 | -4.57 | .000 |
| Method | 7 | 37 | -83.411 | 17 | -10.63 | .000 |
| Evaluation | 4 | 37 | -31.844 | 7 | -3.65 | .000 |
| Total | 24 | 37 | -108.045 | 53 | -32.26 | .000 |

Based on the result for the objective in Table 4, the teachers' mean score ($M = 6.60$, $SD = 1.34$) is significantly lower than the test value (20), $t (37) = -61.324$, $p = .000$. The result for the content component also shows a significantly lower mean score for the teachers ($M = 4.42$, $SD = .68$), $t (37) = -41.324$, $p = .000$. The results for the teachers' perspective regarding the method component also indicate that teachers' mean score ($M = 6.36$, $SD = .78$) is significantly lower than the test value (17), $t (37) = -83.411$, $p = .000$. As for the evaluation component, the result reveals a significant difference between the teachers' mean score ($M = 3.34$, $SD = .70$) and the test value (7), $t (37) = -31.844$, $p = .000$. Considering the whole questionnaire, the result demonstrates that the teachers' mean score ($M = 22.10$, $SD = 8.34$) is significantly lower than the test value (53), $t (37) = -108.045$, $p = .000$.

The mean scores of the teachers and curriculum designers on each component were also compared using the independent samples t-test to determine whether there were significant differences (Table 5).

**Table 5**
*Results of the Independent Sample T-Test*

|  | t | Df | Mean Diff. | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Objective | -5.324 | 62 | -1.79757 | .000 |
| Content | -5.315 | 62 | -1.07490 | .000 |
| Method | -9.530 | 62 | -2.25304 | .000 |
| Evaluation | -3.936 | 62 | -.64980 | .000 |
| Total | -4.237 | 62 | -7.14372 | .000 |

According to the results presented in Table 5, there is a statistically significant difference between the teacher' mean scores on the objective ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 1.29$) and curriculum designers' mean score ($M = 6.60$, $SD = 1.34$), $t$ (62) = -5.324, $p = .000$. The result for the content component shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the teacher's mean score ($M = 3.34$, $SD = .93$) and the curriculum designers' mean scores ($M = 4.42$, $SD = .68$), $t$ (62) = -5.315, $p = .000$. With respect to the method as a component, the result demonstrates a statistically significant difference between the teacher' mean score ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.10$) and the curriculum designers' mean scores ($M = 6.36$, $SD = .78$), $t$ (62) = -9.530, $p = .000$. The result for the evaluation component also reveals that there is a statistically significant difference between the teachers' mean score ($M = 2.69$, $SD = .54$) and curriculum designers' mean score ($M = 3.34$, $SD = .70$), $t$ (62) = -3.93, $p = .000$. Comparing the results for the whole questionnaire indicates that the teachers' mean score ($M = 14.96$, $SD = 2.40$) is significantly different from curriculum the designers' mean score ($M = 22.10$, $SD = 8.34$), $t$ (62) = -4.237, $p = .000$.

## Discussion

The synthesis of the qualitative and quantitative findings underscores a multifaceted critique of the Vision series textbooks. While the qualitative analysis provides depth and context—illuminating specific thematic gaps such as the marginalization of Iranian ethnic diversity (Abdeli Soltan Ahmadi & Sadeghi, 2016) and gender inequity (Sunderland, 2000)—the quantitative data corroborate these concerns by quantifying stakeholder dissatisfaction and highlighting perceptual differences between teachers and curriculum designers. Together, these results suggest that the textbooks not only fail to align with contemporary ELT standards that emphasize cultural inclusivity and critical engagement (Kramsch, 2017) but also fall short of meeting the expectations of those tasked with their implementation and design. This integrated approach thus offers a robust foundation for advocating curriculum revisions that address both the content-

specific issues identified qualitatively and the broader evaluative shortcomings confirmed quantitatively, ultimately aiming to enhance the sociocultural relevance and educational efficacy of ELT materials in the Iranian context (Phillipson, 1992; McGrath, 2002).

The findings of this study reveal significant concerns about how multicultural curriculum components are represented in Iranian high school English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks, especially in the Vision series. While core elements of a multicultural curriculum—such as principles of multicultural education, cultural diversity, equity pedagogy, social and gender equality, prejudice reduction, respect for human dignity, and empowerment of school culture—are acknowledged as vital for creating inclusive educational environments, their practical integration into the textbooks is still lacking.

The qualitative content analysis shows that although these components aim to provide equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of gender, ethnicity, race, or social status, and to support the psychological, social, and academic growth of English Language Learners (ELLs), their implementation within the Vision series is lacking. The textbooks mainly present dominant cultural narratives, offering a limited view of Iran's diverse cultural landscape and rarely engaging with global cultures in depth. This limited exposure hampers students' ability to build intercultural competence. Additionally, the treatment of social issues tends to be superficial and non-critical, often overlooking important topics like social justice, inequality, and ethical dilemmas. Gender representation in the materials reflects deep-seated biases, with stereotypical depictions reinforcing traditional gender roles and failing to promote equity. Overall, these findings reveal a significant gap between the principles of multicultural education and their practical application in ELT materials.

The quantitative data supports these observations by revealing a widespread underrepresentation of the core components of the multicultural curriculum—objectives, content, teaching methods, and evaluation—in the Vision series textbooks, as perceived by both teachers and curriculum designers. Although curriculum designers rated the presence of multicultural elements higher overall, one-sample t-tests show that the average scores from both groups were significantly below the set benchmark values for each component ($p = .000$), indicating a broad deficiency in multicultural content integration. Independent samples t-tests also revealed significant differences between teachers and curriculum designers across all components, highlighting a notable divergence in perceptions of multicultural

adequacy. Notably, teachers reported especially low scores for culturally responsive teaching methods and evaluation strategies, exposing weaknesses in pedagogical support and assessment practices that could impede the development of students' intercultural competence. These quantitative findings reinforce the qualitative results and underscore a critical gap between the multicultural ideals outlined in curriculum frameworks and their actual implementation in instructional materials and classroom practices.

Concerning the findings of the present study, there are several scholarly works that either support or contrast with the findings on the integration of multicultural education in Iranian high school ELT curricula. Studies that align with the results emphasize the importance and current insufficiencies of embedding multicultural components within language teaching. For instance, Akar and Ulu (2016), Asrianti et al. (2022), and Supsiloani et al. (2021) confirm the significance of content integration, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction, and knowledge construction, which resonate with the identification of crucial curriculum elements such as goals, content, methods, and evaluation. Similarly, Sudartini (2011) highlights multicultural education's role in fostering equitable learning opportunities and preparing students to navigate diverse cultural contexts, thereby reinforcing the findings on the psychological, social, and academic benefits for learners. Mostafazadeh et al. (2015) further support the transformative potential of integrating multiculturalism through curricular reform to promote empowerment and social justice, paralleling this study's call for comprehensive restructuring of curriculum and assessment practices. Gay (2004) advocates multicultural education as vital for addressing discrimination while nurturing cultural consciousness, aligning with the study's emphasis on equity pedagogy and inclusive attitudes.

Moreover, research by Parker et al. (2019) and Lin et al. (2019) on prejudice reduction through authentic representation and collaborative learning corresponds with the identified curricular components aimed at fostering positive ethnic and racial perceptions. Conversely, certain studies reveal gaps consistent with this study's observations of underrepresentation and monocultural perspectives in current textbooks. Layne et al. (2017) and Naz et al. (2023) report that many educational materials fail to adequately embody multicultural complexities, echoing the findings of systemic shortcomings in Iranian ELT resources. Gharibi et al. (2016) and Zhang et al. (2019) expose discrepancies between curriculum designers' intentions and teachers' classroom realities, highlighting challenges in implementation that this study also uncovers through significant perception gaps

between these groups. Collectively, these studies substantiate the multidimensional nature of multicultural curriculum integration issues, affirming both the necessity of reform and the barriers faced within the Iranian context and beyond.

The pedagogical implications of these findings are significant. Addressing the gaps between curriculum theory and practice necessitates fostering stronger collaboration between curriculum designers and teachers to ensure that multicultural education goals are effectively translated into classroom materials and instructional methods. Teachers require targeted professional development to implement culturally responsive pedagogies and employ interactive teaching strategies—such as role-playing and debates—that actively engage students in multicultural learning. Additionally, assessment practices should evolve beyond traditional linguistic proficiency tests to include alternative strategies like portfolio assessments, reflective journals, and intercultural communication tasks that more comprehensively evaluate students' intercultural competence and cultural awareness. Revising textbooks to incorporate diverse Iranian cultural narratives, balanced gender representation, and critical engagement with social issues is essential for developing a more inclusive and equitable ELT learning environment. Future research should investigate the impact of these multicultural gaps on students' language acquisition experiences and cultural perceptions, as well as explore effective pathways for adapting instructional materials to better support inclusive education in diverse classrooms.

**Conflict of interest:** None

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