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A Model of Iranian EFL Learners' Cultural Identity: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach

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Abstract

This study aimed, firstly, to investigate the underlying components of Iranian cultural identity and, secondly, to confirm the aforementioned components via Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis. In order to achieve these goals, the researchers reviewed the extensive local and international literature on language, culture and identity. Based on the literature and consultations with a group of 30 university undergraduate and post graduate learners English language learners and a cadre of four university professors in the field of sociology, an Iranian EFL Language Learners' Cultural Identity Model with six components (Nationality, Religion, Arts, Persian Language and Literature, Media, and Globalization) was hypothesized. In order to test and validate the model, a questionnaire was developed. To probe the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha was used. The reliability of all the items in the questionnaire was 0.78. To estimate the construct validity of the model, Exploratory Factor Analysis using PCA was performed, which indicated five components (Religion, Arts, Persian Language and Literature, Media, and Globalization) underlying Iranian Cultural Identity. Then, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis through AMOS 22 was performed to test the model and the interaction among the components. The SEM results confirmed the existence of five factors. Finally, statistical results are discussed and implications are provided.

Keywords: Iranian cultural identity; Identity; Culture

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1. Introduction

The widespread use of English as a lingua franca, i.e., a language for the purpose of communication among those people whose mother tongue may be quite different, has resulted in increasing the number of people who are actually eager to learn it around the world, and Iranian people are not an exception. Teaching and learning a language encompass more than just codes and structures. In actual language use, it is not the case that only the forms of language have the capacity to convey the intended meaning. It is a well-known fact that understanding a language entails not only knowledge of grammar, phonology and lexis but also the certain facets and traits of the culture. To use the language communicatively involves paying close attention to the overall cultural context in which meaning is created. In language classrooms, learners are required to gain the awareness of the ways in which the cultural context affects what is communicated and how it is communicated. Conspicuous philosophers such as Saussure (1966), Foucault (1994), and Chomsky (1968) have long emphasized on the mutual relation between language and culture, i.e. the interaction between language and culture. Still, Sapir (1962) and Whorf (1956) are the most remarkable linguists who are immediately associated with the issue of language and culture. The core of their "Linguistic Relativity" mentions that a) we perceive the world in terms of categories and distinctions found in our

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native language and b) what is found in one language may not be found in another language due to cultural differences. This hypothesis holds that the speakers of different languages think and perceive reality differently and that each language has its own world view. Learning as well as teaching any human languages are indubitably connected with their cultural norms and values which normally define an individual's identity. Cultural identity is correspondingly formed when the members of a community constantly follow the same sets of social norms and rules (Gao, Cheng, Zhao, & Zhou, 2005; Norton, 2000; Pishghadam & Zabibi, 2012). But not until the last decades of the 19th century did an interest develop in certain places in parts of the content of language teaching that went beyond literary education as such. From the 1960s onwards the instruction of cultural issues of a nation began to crystallize out as a more or less independent discipline (Risager, 2007).

However, Nïzegorodcew (2011) mentioned two attitudes toward the relationship between culture and EFL learning. According to the first one, learning a FL is conceived to be demoralizing the national culture and undermining local values while the second attitude considers FL learning as a means to the enrichment of two cultures. The expression 'language and culture pedagogy' captures precisely the point that the theoretical field is at one and the same time a unity and a duality.

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English, as a vibrant and international language, has spread to all parts of the world even where English is not the majority language. Thus, investigating learners' cultural attachment is of critical importance, ameliorating our understanding of the status quo.

2. Theoretical Framework

The interaction between language and culture is a complex issue. Language and culture interact as they are linked to each other. Language transmits cultural elements like beliefs, customs, objects, arts, and techniques and cultural components can be described, analyzed and evaluated by language (Baydak, Scharioth, Il′yashenko, 2015). Understanding one element requires the comprehension of the other element. Gunderson (2000) described language and culture as inextricably linked. According to him, nothing can come from separating them because they seem to become meaningless when apart from each other.

Language learners generally have a tendency to get muddled when they encounter the culture of the foreign language. In other words, it results in the existence of uncertainty and feeling unsure on the part of the foreign language learners as to where they fit in their own community, as they will feel incongruous in this community. Therefore, they need to recognize and absorb

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these new cultural aspects and integrate these with their sense of identity and culture (Gunderson, 2000).

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

Rosaldo (1984, Cited in Pishghadam & Sadeghi, 2011) mentioned the interrelation between identity, culture, and language and considered them as intimately related constructs in the social setting. Language is considered to be a significant element in shaping an individual's identity and as we are teaching a second/foreign language, we are inevitably imparting a second/foreign culture, too which, subsequently, brings about the creation of a second identity. Regarding all these pieces of evidence, cultural identity has attained a significant place in the domain of foreign language teaching and learning.

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2.1. A Selective Review of Empirical works

Learning language is one way or another related to foreign cultural norms and values which typically determine one's self-identity. An individual who studies a foreign language will experience some changes in his or her personality and behaviors. These changes are further influenced by several personal factors, for instance, the learners' age, gender, their motivation and attitude toward learning the language. Each and every factor might be regarded as influential causes of identity changes. In this part, related experimental studies on identity and culture will be expounded.

To highlight the importance of knowing English in the global world, Kubota and McKay (2009) reported on a critical ethnography of a Japanese community with an increasing population of non–English-speaking immigrants. They investigated how people in the Japanese community looked at and took part in diverse locally linguistic situations and how this is related to their subjectivities and experiences in English language learning and use. The data were based on the public report of a community survey on diversity conducted by the city and the interviews with three Japanese volunteer leaders who were teachers and learners of English and two Japanese who studied Portuguese in order to support the local Brazilian migrant workers. According to the results, they highlighted four

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emergent themes that advocated the importance of learning English in a linguistically diverse context.

In order to investigate the home cultural attachment of teachers in the context of prevailing English language use, Pishghadam and Sadeghi (2011) studied the role of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) on teachers' accessibility to social as well as cultural capital in their home culture, using Bourdieu's theories in the sociology of education as frames of reference. To do so, two questionnaires were given to a group of 342 Iranian EFL teachers in Mashhad. The results revealed that although teachers' home culture attachment was not affected by their total social/cultural capital, access to two components of social/cultural capital, namely, social competence and social solidarity, had a major impact on teachers' home culture attachment. That is, cultural competence negatively influenced their home culture attachment. The remaining components, literacy and extroversion, influenced their home culture attachment. Furthermore, Rezaei and Bahrami (2019) investigated the level of Iranian English language teachers' cultural identity through hypothesizing a cultural identity model. To test the model, a questionnaire was developed and piloted on 50 Iranian English language teachers and then administered to 636 male and female Iranian English language teachers. The results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis indicated that the model was fit and included the following eight components: religious

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beliefs, history, customs, manners and behaviors, Persian language, literature and art, parents' influence and family relations. The findings also showed that the older and more experienced teachers depicted the highest level of Iranian cultural identity and female teachers had stronger Iranian cultural identity than male teachers.

Hofstede's cultural framework exemplified a valid operationalization of culture based on six cultural dimensions (power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, short-term/long-term orientation, and indulgence/restraint). Saboori, Pishghadam, Fatemi and Ghonsooli (2015) investigated the link between the dimensions of Hofstede's cultural framework and the constituents of Iranian identity. To achieve this goal, the Cultural Dimensions Scale (CDS) along with the Cultural Attachment Scale (CAS) were given to a sample of Iranian university students. Multiple Correspondence Analysis and Multiple Regression Analysis were employed to analyze the data. The findings showed a significant relationship between cultural dimensions and the identity components. The results also revealed that while indulgence was the only predictor of National Identity, Religious Identity had four predictors, namely, power distance, collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and short-term orientation. And finally, Western Identity was predicted by power distance and individualism.

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Hosseinpur and Farahani (2017) investigated the impact of cultural intelligence and cultural identity on Iranian EFL learners' use of politeness strategies. To achieve this goal, fifty two intermediate language learners were asked to fill out the questionnaires of Cultural Intelligence, L1 Cultural identity and Discourse Completion Tasks. The analysis of the data proved no interaction effect of cultural intelligence and cultural identity levels on the use of politeness strategies. The findings can be informative of imminent obliterating L1 cultural identity among EFL learners.

Learning a foreign language might also result in recreating learners' cultural identity and may lead to the development of a new foreign language identity. Shabani and Alipoor (2017) investigated the existence of any possible interaction between cultural identity, intrinsic motivation, and pronunciation knowledge of Iranian EFL learners at intermediate level. To do so, two questionnaires, Mathews' Cultural Identity Questionnaire (2007) and intrinsic/extrinsic motivation questionnaire developed by Noels, Pelletier, Clement, and Vallerand (2000) were administered to 49 intermediate Iranian EFL learners in Birjand. The participants' pronunciation knowledge was also measured through an interview. The analysis of the data indicated that while cultural identity depicted no relationship with pronunciation knowledge of the participants, learners who were more intrinsically motivated

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gained higher scores on the pronunciation test. Maeder-Qian (2018) also investigated the interaction between intercultural experiences and the cultural identity reconstruction of Chinese international students in Germany by focusing on their cultural learning, and use of multiple languages including English as a lingua franca (ELF), German and Chinese. The data were gathered through interviews conducted over 1 year with 17 Chinese students in German universities. The findings revealed that most participants foregrounded their core Chinese identity against other intercultural identities.

An important issue considering learning a foreign language is the concept of home culture attachment and its impacts on learning any other languages and vice versa. In the case of learning a second language, language learners are not absolutely able to detach themselves from the sociocultural context where they are dependent on the knowledge source built based on their home society (Hinkel, 1999). Language is reckoned to be a social, cultural and psychological phenomenon, but just a glance at the previous Iranian studies would reveal the fact that sociocultural factors have been marginalized in the periphery and as a consequence, sociocultural issues in language teaching seem to be somehow neglected by Iranian applied linguists. Another significant issue in accordance to the previous studies is that these studies have not informed the contextual and local needs. What seems to

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be clear in these studies is that most of them have been conducted in settings where English is the main means of communication, i.e. in second language context, and relatively very few studies have been done in the contexts of English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

Learning as well as using a second/foreign language have surely had huge bearings on the learners' cultural identity and their sense of belonging to a community. This can be explained due to the fact that identity is embedded in culture and language. Whilst psychological issues are paramount to the formation of our identity, we will be addressing the nature of our identity in relation to sociocultural factors. This study accordingly intended to pave the way for future research to be devoted to the sociocultural aspects of language mentioned above and included local theories besides western theories of identity and culture to make the study contextually richer. This study included more contextualized factors related to the Iranian context. Local theories and studies were intentionally embedded to form the link between this study and the previous ones, and whenever it was allowed, a critical approach was taken. Considering the importance of learning English and its culture in Iran and its impact on identity, introducing a valid model for measuring Iranian cultural identity can be a fruitful endeavor. Therefore, the following research questions were formulated to achieve the goals of the present study.

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1- What are the main components of Iranian EFL learners' cultural identity?
2- Does the hypothesized model of language identity for English language learners in Iran show acceptable fit indices as explored through the Iranian Cultural Identity Questionnaire?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study were different numbers of Iranian university English language learners with different language proficiency levels (Basic, Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, High-Intermediate, Advanced), of different ages (from 18-39 years old), from both genders (male and female) and studying in different majors (English Literature, Linguistics, Translation, and Teaching English as a Foreign Language) for its different stages. Stratified random sampling was employed to select 50 respondents for the initial piloting and 209 for the reliability, Exploratory Factory Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) stages. A group of 30 under-graduate and postgraduate EFL learners from different universities and a panel of four experts in sociology were conferred for the components of the model hypothesized and tested and the experts further commented on the

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wording of the items, content and construct of the questionnaire developed.

3.2. Procedure

The initial purpose of this study was to determine and define the main components of EFL learners' cultural identity in Iran in order to develop an Iranian Cultural Identity Model. The hypothesized model was developed after the researchers reviewed the related literature and went through consultations and interviews with a group of 30 EFL language learners and 4 experts in the field of sociology. To test the model, a questionnaire was designed and validated through a number of meticulous and scrupulous stages. Then, the data from the questionnaire was fed into the model to test the model fitness. All these stages with their complex statistical procedures are mentioned henceforth.

3.2.1. Hypothesizing the Model

To hypothesize a tentative model of Iranian EFL learners' cultural identity, the researchers reviewed the related literature on identity and culture and interviewed 30 EFL learners and a panel of four experts in sociology to see what constitutes Iranian EFL learners' cultural identity. In this stage, 30 EFL learners were chosen to comment on the components of cultural identity as the main purpose of this study was to develop a model of Iranian EFL learners' cultural identity. The researchers, furthermore, interviewed

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a panel of 4 sociologists, first to gain fuller awareness of the components and, then, to confirm the findings. The content analysis of the data gathered through the interviews identified 6 components to be the main constituents of Iranian cultural identity. The panel of the experts was further and later consulted on the findings of the interviews and all four sociologists confirmed the existence of these six elements (i.e., Nationality, Religion, Arts, Persian Language and Literature, Media, and Globalization).

The model was hypothesized and a questionnaire was developed to test the model.

3.2.2. Questionnaire Development

In order to develop a reliable and valid questionnaire, the researchers generated a pool of items based on the hypothesized model. For an initial piloting, the 54-item questionnaire was administered to a group of 50 students similar to the target population for which the questionnaire was designed. Based on the feedbacks received, the researchers omitted some of the items and modified some of the others. Consequently, the remaining questionnaire included 27 items.

To measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was estimated. The 27-item questionnaire at this stage was administered to 209 Iranian English language learners. The results for the

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Cronbach's Alpha showed that the internal consistency of the whole questionnaire was 0.78.

Face validity, content validity and construct validity were investigated for questionnaire validation in the current study.

The face validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by employing a good layout, suitable font type, appropriate margin, etc.

The content validity of the questionnaire was ensured by asking the panel of experts on sociology to check how meticulously the items represented the Iranian cultural identity. These two kinds of validity, that is, face and content validity, were investigated and confirmed just prior to the reliability phase.

To investigate the construct validity, the researchers employed two procedures. In the first stage, the questionnaire was checked for its congruency with the theories in the literature concerning culture and identity, and this was accomplished by iteratively checking the items with the researches in the literature. In the second stage, Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor analyses were used to statistically check the validity.

The researchers selected Principle Components Analysis (PCA) in order to run factor analysis.

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The initial results of factor analysis based on PCA, as shown in Table 1, indicated that a five-factor solution might provide a more suitable grouping of the items in the questionnaire.

Table 1

Factor Loading Based on PCA

Component Matrix[a]								
	Component							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
q1	.636					.470		
q11			.605					
q13			.513					
q14			.568					
q17			.518					
q18			.495					
q19			.673					
q2			.438					
q20				.692				
q22				.692				
q23				.695				
q24				.682				
q27			.504					
q28							.519	
q29							.534	

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q3			.514					
q33							.538	
q36							.474	
q37						.456		
q39						.474		
q40						.472		
q43	.667							
q46		.802						
q47		.804						
q48		.790						
q54		.752						
q8			.487					

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
a. 8 components extracted.

Having done the exploratory factor analysis, the researchers decided to run a Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), a multivariate analysis technique for exploring causality in models and the causal relations among variables, was run. SEM is normally used as a confirmatory technique to test models that are conceptually derived a priori or test if a theory fits the data. SEM shows the relationship between latent variables, that is, the components of Iranian cultural identity in this study, and the observable variables, that is, the items in the questionnaire generated for each of the components in Iranian cultural identity construct (Khatib & Rezaei, 2013).

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

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

- x2 according to which non-significant x2 ($p>0.05$) indicates good fit;
- Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA); acceptable fit<0.10 and good fit<0.05; hence the smaller the RMSEA, the better and fitter the model is; and
- The Comparative Fit Index (CFI)>0.90 is considered as good fit.

In this study, absolute fit indices were taken into account because there was no previous model to test this model against. The initial results of SEM showed poor fitness for the model. Hence, some changes were made in the model to make it fit the data. These changes included removing some of the items like questions 2, 3, 8, 19, 27 (all from the first factor, i.e., nationality and religion), 33, 36 (from language and literature) and 43 (from media) because they showed low factor loadings. The omission of

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items 2,3,8, 19, and 27 made the researchers rename the first factor as "Religion". Hence, the model was revised and SEM was once again run. The output of the second SEM showed x2=448.5, df=126, p=0.00, which shows a significant value for Chi-square. Since Chi-square value is dependent on sample size, x2/df was used as a solution, which is 448.5/126= 3.55 and is considered as an acceptable degree. Although there is no consensus regarding an acceptable ratio for this statistic, recommendations range from as high as 5.0 (Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin & Summers, 1977) to as low as 2.0 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The results of the second SEM also indicated CFI=0.946 and RMSEA= 0.076, which were also acceptable. An RMSEA range between 0.08 and 0.10 provides a mediocre fit and below 0.08 shows a good fit (MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996). The values for CFI range between 0.0 and 1.0 with values closer to 1.0 indicating good fit. However, recent studies have shown that a value greater than 0.90 is needed as indicative of good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The indices for SEM showed a desirable level of fitness based on the output from AMOS 22. Hence, all the indices were at an acceptable level and the model seems to be a fit model. In other words, the data gathered in this study seemed to support this model.

Figure 1 shows the schematic representation of the recursive model of Iranian cultural identity. Path coefficients were also placed on the pathways from each

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latent variable to other latent or observable variables to show the strength of relation or correlation among the variables.

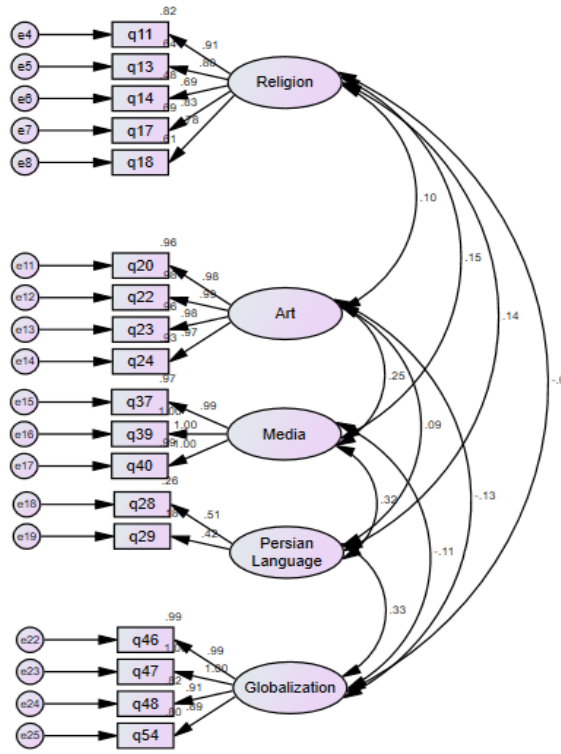


Figure 1. Final Model of Iranian Cultural Identity for EFL Learners

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4. Results

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

Thereafter, six main components for Iranian cultural identity were identified and organized. The components were Nationality, Religion, Persian Language and Literature, Art, Media, and Globalization (Nationality was later omitted). Table 2 below shows the definition for each of the identified components of Iranian cultural identity.

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Table 2

The Hyposized Model with Its Components and Definitions

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

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Consequently, the researchers in this study made an endeavor to develop a model for Iranian cultural identity to embrace its relevant constituents and a questionnaire to test the model. Based on the detailed statistical data elaborated in the Method section, the cultural identity model for English language learners in Iran, developed in this study, showed acceptable fit indices.

5. Discussion

There have been three types of identity which received special significance in Iranian context. These three kinds of identity, namely, national, religious, and western identities, are of great importance as they form the Iranian identity components (Karimifard, 2012). During the last two centuries, the pendulum of Iranian identity has moved back and forth between Persian, Islamic, and Modern cultural aspects, and these diverse components of Iranian identity have always been given relative distinctive weight. Hence, the components of Iranian identity originate from three major cultural realms: Persian, Islamic, and Western (Zahed, 2004), among which Western ranks the most influential force. This Western identity is the main outcome of globalization era.

Globalization refers to the increase and intensification of flows of goods, services, capital, ideas, and information which generates integration of a number of economic, social and cultural activities across borders

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(Alberi & Bertrucci, 2006). Globalization is the overriding force in forming a new age of interaction and interdependence among nations all around the world. Globalization generates novel opportunities to different countries through the processes of economic liberalization, foreign investments, technological exchange, and information flows (Stiglitz, 2003).

Globalization is a complicated, multidimensional occurrence. It embraces nearly all features of modern life including the economic aspects, the cultural aspects, the political aspects, the social aspects, etc. From among these aspects, globalization seems to be more influential in three dimensions: Economic dimension, Political Dimension, and Socio-cultural Dimension (Das Gupta & Chattopadya, 2004).

Despite the fact that the history of interaction between various communities has surpassed a millennium, the impact of globalization on modern society is not more than a few decades. It creates both opportunities and costs. It is a double-edged sword.

Globalization suggests an improved level of cultural interconnectedness across the world, mainly the outcome of the media, migration, tourism and the global economic and political institutions. Globalization introduces opportunities to the local cultures to experience alternative ways of

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living. Local communities are granted the chance to deal with ideas such as human rights, democracy, market economy, as well as new methods of production, new products for consumption and new leisure habits. These ideas pave the way for the better understandings of culture, nationality, and the self in the world (Nash, 2000).

Countries are left with no choice except adopting globalization and adapting to the changes brought to them economically, politically and culturally. The negative outcomes of globalization arise from the increasing level of unemployment due to incapability of smaller industries to compete with the international industrial firms, lack of interest in traditional assistant and craftsmen, and migration of people from their original environment for livelihood (Nash, 2000).

As a social being in this global world, an individual is required to use language to communicate, to talk about his or her ideas and thoughts and share them with others. However, as no one is capable of knowing and using all the languages in the world, there seems to be a felt-need for a global language to take the role of communication language. English language has been regarded as the global lingua franca. It is being spoken across the world either as the first language, or as the second official language, or being taught at schools to enable people to communicate. English has certainly received the highest rank among most

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non-English speaking countries as the first priority for second language learning (Graddol, 1997).

It seems quite evident that English, as an international language, plays a pivotal role in the process of globalization and it is also affected by the process of globalization. Globalization has a great impact on the form of English and the way it should be instructed.

Nowadays, many nations consider English language learning as a crucial factor in the competition of the global era. Numerous developing countries motivate their students to attend English language classes or even to settle in English speaking countries to gain not only English knowledge and skills but also English mastery. This leads to the dominance of English speaking countries which automatically gain the benefit of this trend. In reality, the spread of English has been arranged, organized, and orchestrated by the experts in the field in Core countries like UK, USA, and Canada (Phillipson, 2008). According to Matsunuma (2011), "Not only is the English language itself an obstacle to some learners, but also technological access and cultural innuendos within curriculum have created, arguably, a silent form of virtual imperialism" (p. 36). As Pennycook (1994) put it, ELT is a product of imperialism due to its intact and whole representation of the values and principles of the Core countries. It seems quite undoubtable that ELT theories and practices exemplify and

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signify the dominant Western culture. The existing literature concerning the impacts of globalization on every aspects of life specifically foreign/second language learning provides two principle sides of the argument. One argument states that English is a means of communication and helps language learners gain access to services such as education and employment (Mufwene, 2015). Conversely, the second argument states that English is proceeding as an oppressor and is unfavorable to other languages and cultures (Phillipson 2008). Currently, there is no evidence proving that either explanation is more correct than the other.

Pennycook (1994) recommended that English language experts all around the world need to appropriate and adopt the language as well as the materials for instructing the language, to the local demands and the situated conditions of their own nations: "perhaps language – and particularly English as an international language – should be replaced by a vision of powerful discursive formations globally and strategically employed" (p.64). Language instruction should incorporate teachers' political engagement, and the curriculum development must involve social issues linked with particular category of students. What language learners need to understand is to gain the ability to tolerate the differences of races, classes, cultures, religions, and genders in the era of globalization. That is, globalization aims to develop a situation in which members can co-exist peacefully through communication and

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dialogue. This requires a redefinition and reconceptualization of the concept of local community, national community, and global community.

According to Norton (2000), the contact between the native and target cultures can lead to identity conflicts among learners. Hence, there has always been the vulnerability that language instructors might disregard and ignore the sociocultural conditions that form language learners' identity in the classroom.

In this respect, Kumaravadivelu's (2006) maintained that any post-method pedagogy "must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu" (p. 171).

Therefore, one of the main characteristics of any post-method pedagogy is to gain a clear understanding on the part of English language teachers, lesson planners, materials developers, and policy makers of linguistic, sociocultural, and political localities of particular language learner. Language teachers should provide the grounds for the learners to reflect on their own culture while learning the target language. These language teachers must be teaching language effectively without blindly following Western teaching standards. Thus, many scholars all around

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the world have called for the localization of English language teaching (Kramsch, 2001).

Today, localization of materials appears quite helpful and advantageous to language learners since it aims to make the materials more familiar and, consequently, more pleasing and gratifying. It seems impractical to await comprehensive source culture materials. However, certain amount of localization of materials looks necessary. According to Byram and Morgan (1994), it seems like a simplistic view to expect language learners to shake off their own culture and accept another. They are normally committed to their own culture, avoid denying any part of their culture as this is almost equal to repudiating something within their own being. Thus, materials localization is conceived to be an easy, straightforward path to valuing and admiring the cultural identities of the language learners, leading to more motivation on the part of the learner to learn the language and a fuller grasp and comprehension of the materials.

Localized materials are said to operate as bridges to learning a foreign language with the help of features derived from the language learner's own native language.

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5. Discussion

Teaching and learning English in Iran in an era of globalization pose complex questions for both teachers and learners. Nowadays, English is being studied, taught, and used as an international language. Learners learn the language as an additional means of wider communication. When it comes to English education, globalization fundamentally impacts the form of English and the method through which it should be taught in language classes. According to McKay (2003), the development of English as an International Language (EIL) has resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of speakers of English and a shift in the cultural basis of the language. It affects English in terms of how it is used by its speakers and how it relates to culture. The dominance of native language and its culture and its speakers in the context of ELT pedagogy has been critically challenged. It seems that the time has arrived to recognize the multicultural context of English use and to close the eyes to a native speaker model of research and instruction. This generates the opportunities for the local educators to take ownership of English and the manner in which it is going to be taught (McKay, 2003).

5.2.1. Target Community Culture Rather Than Merely Native-Speaker Culture

English educators must direct their attention and attempts to design curricula with an international and multicultural

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focus. They also need to put equal emphasis on non-native as well as native speakers' cultural knowledge concerning both the target and local features in teaching materials. ELT course books and curricula must offer the language learners the opportunity to improve their cultural awareness by including global and multicultural perspectives (Shin, Eslami and Chen, 2012). Using the source culture must enable and encourage language learners to practice using English to express their own culture and identity. Providing the learners with international cultural materials can enhance learners' cross-cultural pragmatics, by which they can reflect on both their own rules of social appropriateness and those of the appropriateness of other cultures (McKay, 2003).

5.2.2. Literatures in English rather than Solely English Literature

Despite the abundance of literary works in countries other than the Core countries, nearly none of these works are referred to and reflected upon in the global course books. Frequently, language learners are only exposed to the literature of the Core countries like England and America. The bombardment of literature which incorporates works of English or American novelists, writers, and poets is not in line with the main objectives of EIL-based course books.

Therefore, in the development of cultural contents of the course book, the material developers should make

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use of not only English or American literary works but also non-native speakers' literature. In other words, instead of solely integrating and incorporating English literature into the global course books, the future global course books should also include literary works from different countries.

5.2.3. Unbiased Representation of both Native and Non-Native Speakers of English

EFL materials principally present stereotypical representations and accounts of English native speakers with highly positive features. So, it would not be astounding to observe nonnative speakers trying to assimilate those native speakers' identities by imitating their accents (Sharifian, 2009). This stereotypical representation exacerbates the language learners' view of their own culture. Instead of picturing English native speakers as an ideal community who live in a utopian society, material developers must make attempts to put equal emphasis on more unbiased representation of native-speakers of English. That is, global course books in future should introduce a balance between the fair representation of both native and non-native speakers of English.

5.2.4. Cultural Liberty (Learning From Other Cultures) rather than Cultural Literacy (Learning about Other Cultures)

The world-wide spread of English must not lead to the global approval of American English or British English as

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the only acceptable norm of usage. Instead, the chief purpose of the global spread of English needs to provoke and encourage the multicultural diversification of English. Therefore, intercultural literacy is considered as a prerequisite to improve mutual relationship among different varieties of English (Honna, 2008).

As Kumaravadivelu (2011) stated, in the process of learning cultures, more emphasis should be rendered to learning 'from other cultures' rather than 'about other cultures'. Learning about other cultures results in cultural literacy while learning from other cultures creates cultural liberty. Cultural liberty might be the outcome of deeper investigation into the contemporary realities which form the cultural identities in our world rather than endorsing superficial cultural artifacts like 'food', 'fashion' or 'festivals' as cultural literacy in the classroom.

5.2.5. English for Specific Cultures rather than Solely English of Specific Cultures

In order to motivate the language learners to use English efficiently in their future interaction with other nonnative speakers, ESL/EFL course books and curricula must strongly prevent any extreme inclusion of linguistic and cultural norms of English in the Core countries to the exclusion of other countries. Having sufficient exposure to different linguistic and cultural norms used in different countries around the world may improve the learners'

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understanding of the point that the sole use of English is not limited to that used by the Core countries (Sharifian; 2009).

6. Conclusion

The significance of culture and identity as a social/cultural matter in ELT context can become evident by having a glance at the immense proliferation of publications in these areas through the release of hundreds of books and articles (e.g., Billikopf, 2009; Maeder-Qian, 2018; Risager, 2007). However, studies investigating identity deal with a complex human characteristic, and hence, the data gathered might suffer from some degree of pollution due to its dealing with a personal construct. Two of the potential sources of criticisms are related to the generalizability of such researches and the intrusion of subjectivity.

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

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validity of the model and the questionnaire and the fact that the data gathered in this study through a reliable and valid questionnaire seem to have fit the model, this would not make this model vaccinated for any other deficiencies and shortcomings. The participants did not constitute a truly representative sample of the whole population of language learners in Iran. This study also limited its focus on language learners studying at universities, excluding other language learners in other institutes.

As the main tenets of this study were based upon some sort of a personal construct, that is, identity, some sources of subjectivity might be detected in the study due to the nature of the study. The study was performed in the context of Iran. So the generalizability of this study is limited to the Iranian context. Finally limitations of research facilities and cultural and structural difficulties usually result in irregular research, that is, parallel works and repeated research.

Future researchers are suggested to illuminate the dim, opaque aspects of the construct under study, that is, cultural identity, by doing more comprehensive researches.

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