Validation of a Preliminary Model of Cultural Identity for Iranian Advanced EFL Learners: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach

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Abstract
This study was an endeavor to develop a model of cultural identity among Iranian advanced EFL learners. To achieve this end, a multiphase design was implemented. Initially, it was attempted to investigate different factors of cultural identity to propose and validate a model. Thus, 20 EFL learners studying in Safir English language institute in Tehran were interviewed about their views of their cultural identity in the qualitative phase. After extracting four factors of cultural identity including: "religion, culture, nationality, and language", a questionnaire was constructed which reflected these factors. Then, in the quantitative phase, the 30-item questionnaire went through an exploratory factor analysis for the sake of validity and after its validity and reliability were corroborated through a pilot study with 183 learners, it was distributed among 384 EFL learners. In addition, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis was run through LISREL 8.8. to confirm that the final proposed model enjoyed validity for future research. To do so, a confirmatory factor analysis was run and the model of cultural identity was developed. Eventually, the possible relationship between 384 EFL learners' cultural identity and their English language achievement scores was examined and the results of this phase indicated that there was a significant and positive relationship between learners' cultural identity and their English language achievement scores. The findings of this study can enhance awareness among English teachers, materials developers, and syllabus designers to equip themselves with the updated techniques to handle the possible challenges that may occur in EFL learning contexts.

Keywords: Culture, EFL learners, identity, model, validation

Introduction

Perhaps the first thing that comes to mind regarding the definition of culture is that culture is the characteristics of a particular group of people who share same customs, social habits, and language. Morcos (2018) believes that each culture is unique and it can be defined through filters. In addition, cultural identity is described as people' nature and nurture. According to Edwards (2009, p. 2), "identity is at the heart of the person, and the group, and the connective tissue that links them. People need a sense of belonging and language can bring such a sense of belonging" and the way teachers define themselves in relation to their profession is referred to as teacher identity (Morita, 2004). Some scholars believe that language is a marker of identity or it is only a surface feature of identity (Edwards, 2009; May, 2008).

Many researchers maintain that cultural identity is an important asset for psychological adaptation (Horenczyk, Liebkind, Phinney, &Vedder, 2001). Such connection between cultural identity and adaptation has been examined empirically, and it has been reported that a strong

cultural identity intends to be related with positive well-being among members of a group experiencing acculturation (e.g., Abu-Rayya, 2006; Smith & Silva, 2011). Ritlyova (2009) also asserts that it is possible to improve L2 learners' perception of a second language culture along with their own culture through raising learners' awareness of an L2. Clearly, the relationship between language and culture is complex. According to Tavares and Cavalcanti (1996), the instruction of culture is essentially aimed at raising learners' awareness as well as increasing their curiosity towards the L2 culture. Similarly, Kaikkonen (2001) claims that L2 instruction is primarily intended to help the learners to transcend the boundaries of their native language (L1) and their own culture which in fact reflects their identity.

However, questions like to what extent Iranian language learners are open to this foreign culture and how their cultural identity interacts with learning another language were the motives fueling this study. Thus, the findings of this study would pave the way for more in depth analysis of cultural identity and the way it facilitates or hinders foreign language learning in Iranian context. Presenting an Iranian model of cultural identity for advanced EFL learners can make the process of language learning more understandable for language teachers in Iran to equip themselves with appropriate methods and materials in classes.

Literature Review

The emphasis on culture learning in EFL classrooms is obvious in different studies. For example, Martinez-Gibson (1998, p.125) states "the foreign language classroom is where students can begin to acquire some awareness of people who not only speak differently but also live differently. This cultural knowledge leads to a tolerable acceptance of the world's variation". Therefore, EFL classrooms are the places to teach and learn culture as well as language. In fact, learning an L2 is "not simply learning new information (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, etc.) which is part of [one's] own culture but rather acquiring symbolic elements of a different ethno linguistic community" (Gardner, 2001, p. 17). Some researchers (e.g., Ho, 2009; Naqeeb, 2012; Zhao, 2010) have studied different aspects of culture in different contexts all over the world.

Mao (2009) has investigated the factors influencing the instruction of culture in L2 classrooms. This study was aimed at developing a framework for culture teaching in China. Mao found that it is necessary to take account of the importance of cultural factors in L2 classrooms to attain a better awareness of the target language. Ho (2009) has also examined the status of culture in EFL teaching in Vietnam as well as the impact of intercultural language learning on students' L2 learning. It was actually expected that the proposed cultural components would increase cultural awareness and engage learners in culture learning. In another study by Rezaei & Bahrami (2019), it was proved that these days nations are nervous about their only strongly-held possession; cultural identity, due to the changes that globalization has caused and it can influence language learning.

In his study, Sabatin (2013) examined the impact of students' cultural awareness on their learning English. The findings of the study showed significant differences between participants who are culturally aware and those who do not know anything in terms of their performance on reading comprehension. Alptekin (2006) also proved that learners' cultural awareness impact their language learning. Razmjoo (2010) carried out a study to find out the possible effect of identity on the achievement of Iranian learners, who were learning EFL. The findings showed no significant relationship between L2 achievement and the aspects of identity. Put it another way, identity cannot predict language achievement in the Iranian context.

A study conducted by Chavez (2002) on the perceptions of German learners toward the inclusion of culture in foreign language classes can provide more insights. Administering a combination of a quantitative and qualitative questionnaire, Chavez (2002) found that learners are attracted to learning about products and practices rather than perspectives. In addition, Norrizan (1993) conducted a study to examine the effect of various cultural components in ESL texts in Malaysia. She made use of a combined cultural unit which was comprised of culturally suggestive topics and concluded that the textbooks were inclined towards middle-class values and lifestyles with meaningful interactions among the learners in these classrooms. She recommended that teachers should take a selective approach in choosing appropriate items by taking account of learners' culture.

Several scholars have recently started proposing a model to make their issues more tangible and generalizable in a particular context. For instance, Samimi & Sahragard (2018) attempted to propose a model of reading strategy using SEM for ELT students and the results substantiated the initial structure of the reading questionnaire as the validated model. Similarly, considering the topic of this study, Razmjoo and Mavaddat (2015) investigated how justice judgments, outcomes, and identity orientations are related. To this end, the investigation used a structural equation modeling, with the aim of finding out the possible impact of identity on the relationship between justice judgment and outcomes. The findings of the study revealed a significant positive correlation between procedural justice and rule compliance and a significant correlation between distributive justice and outcome satisfaction. Based on the developed structural equation model, justice judgments were found to only directly impact the outcomes. Finally, identity did not have any impacts on the causal relationship between the two. Moreover, the study conducted by Naqeeb (2012) has contributed a coherent foundation for the L2 instructors familiarizing them with the main features of culture of the target language. Naqeeb provides L2 teachers with cultural training, drawing on the American Access Micro-Scholarship Program as a model of cultural literacy. The researcher recommends that L2 instructors take a new approach to language teaching, focusing on the cultural aspects of target language.

Several studies targeting various aspects of culture, identity, and language achievement were enumerated and it became evident that none of them dealt directly with the topic of the current study in Iranian context. Furthermore, these studies and their presented models are specific to the population under the study and the findings may not be generalizable to other contexts. Thus, more research is needed to investigate how cultural identify of Iranian learners is associated with foreign language learning. Therefore, the current study is invaluable in terms of filling the gap in the current literature and its contribution to the literature on language, culture, and identity in a context like of Iran. Based on a validated model of cultural identity, it can also be learned how Iranian cultural identity is and whether it is facilitative or debilitative to foreign language learning and accordingly, new strategic plans are thought of for preserving the essential features of Iranian identity in EFL classes.

Research Questions

The present research aimed at validating and refining a model of cultural identity and investigating the possible relationship between cultural identity and English language achievement to answer the following questions.

Q1: What validated model of cultural identity can be set forth for Iranian advanced EFL learners based on the preliminary model of cultural identity and through running SEM?

Q2: Is there any significant relationship between cultural identity and English language achievement scores of Iranian advanced EFL learners?

Methodology

This study follows a multiphase design; qualitative, quantitative, and correlational, to develop a model of cultural identity and to explore the possible relationship between EFL learners' cultural identity and their English language achievement.

The Qualitative Phase

Participants

The first group of participants consisted of 20 EFL learners (10 males and 10 females) studying in Safir English Language Institute in Tehran, Iran. These EFL learners were studying at advanced level and their age range was eighteen to thirty five. The sampling method was convenience sampling since the researcher selected the participants from among the available group of EFL learners.

Instrument

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

Data Collection Procedure

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

Data Analysis Procedure

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

The Quantitative Phase

As a result of the data analysis in the qualitative phase, the most significant factors of Iranian EFL learners' cultural identity were extracted and then a questionnaire representing all these factors was constructed. Obviously, this researcher-constructed questionnaire consisting of 30 items needed to be piloted and validated before being assigned to the target population.

The Pilot Study

Participants

A total number of 183 EFL learners, 106 females and 77 males, studying English at advanced level of proficiency in Safir English Language Institute, took part in this research. Their age range was eighteen to thirty five.

Instrument

The instrument was a researcher-constructed questionnaire designed based on the information extracted from the responses of the participants in the qualitative phase. After analyzing the scripts of the interviews, four main factors were identified and they were represented in 30 items in the first draft of the questionnaire. These factors included religion, culture, nationality, and language. The respondents were required to express their attitudes on a pre-coded five-point Likert scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis included validating the questionnaire and involved calculating reliability and construct-related validity of the instrument to see whether the instrument really measures the constructs it was going to measure. The reliability of the whole questionnaire was carried out through Cronbach's alpha and checking the construct-validity of the questionnaire was performed through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) run by SPSS (version 22).

Results of the Pilot Study

Checking the Reliability of the Questionnaire

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

Table 1. *Cronbach's Alpha report of the cultural identity questionnaire* ***c****hecking the Construct Validity of the questionnaire through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)*

Items	No.	Cronbach's alpha
The whole questionnaire	30	**0.961**

To check the validity of the cultural identity questionnaire, exploratory factor analysis was applied by running SPSS 22. The factorability of the data, as Pallant (2007) suggests, can be checked through two statistical tests of Bartlett's test (Bartlett, 1954) which should be significant ($p < 0.05$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy minimum of which should be 0.6. The indexes of these two tests for the present study are presented in table 2.

Table 2. *KMO and Bartlett's Test*

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

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

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

Table 3. *The amount of items of the questionnaire shared before/after factorability*

Items of the questionnaire	The amount shared before factorability	The amount shared after factorability
No. 1	1	0.982
No. 2	1	0.985
No. 3	1	0.47
No. 4	1	0.965
No. 5	1	0.884
No. 6	1	0.976
No. 7	1	0.464
No. 8	1	0.983
No. 9	1	0.963
No. 10	1	0.972
No. 11	1	0.943
No. 12	1	0.969
No. 13	1	0.972
No. 14	1	0.97
No. 15	1	0.972
No. 16	1	0.947
No. 17	1	0.961
No. 18	1	0.981
No. 19	1	0.934
No. 20	1	0.961
No. 21	1	0.963
No. 22	1	0.98
No. 23	1	0.939
No. 24	1	0.967
No. 25	1	0.972

No. 26	1	0.966
No. 27	1	0.976
No. 28	1	0.282
No. 29	1	0.967
No. 30	1	0.971

As it's clear in table 3, three (items; 3, 7, & 28) out of 30 items had the least shared amount; less than 0.5, that needed to be omitted due to failing to achieve the necessary requirement. As a result, 27 items were subjected to principal component analysis. Pallant (2007) suggested three methods to check the suitable number of factors to retain. Table 4 consists of three parts: initial eigenvalues, rotated eigenvalues, and eigenvalues without rotation. The first one is Kaiser's criterion or the eigenvalue rule in which only the factors are retained whose eigenvalues are equal or greater than 1.0. Those that are less than this amount will be eliminated from the analysis. For the factors of cultural identity, one to four had the eigenvalues more than 1 or close to 1 and as a result, they remained in the analysis. These four factors may explain 96,355 % of the variance as indicated in table 4.

Table 4. *Total variance explained*

Components	**Initial Eigenvalues**			**Eigenvalues of extracted components without rotation**			**Eigenvalues of extracted components after rotation**		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	14.422	53.417	53.417	14.422	53.417	53.417	7.743	28.679	28.679
2	5.066	18.765	72.181	5.066	18.765	72.181	6.689	24.775	53.454
3	3.479	12.886	85.068	3.479	12.886	85.068	5.855	21.684	75.138
4	3.048	11.288	96.355	3.048	11.288	96.355	5.728	21.217	96.355
5	0.375	1.391	97.746						
6	0.21	0.778	98.523						
7	0.109	0.403	98.927						
8	0.061	0.226	99.153						
9	0.047	0.174	99.327						
10	0.041	0.153	99.481						
11	0.029	0.107	99.587						
12	0.02	0.073	99.66						
13	0.011	0.039	99.7						

14	0.01	0.035	99.735						
15	0.009	0.034	99.769						
16	0.009	0.033	99.802						
17	0.009	0.033	99.835						
18	0.009	0.032	99.867						
19	0.008	0.029	99.895						
20	0.006	0.023	99.918						
21	0.006	0.022	99.94						
22	0.005	0.02	99.96						
23	0.004	0.016	99.976						
24	0.003	0.01	99.985						
25	0.002	0.008	99.993						
26	0.001	0.004	99.997						
27	0.001	0.003	100						

Thus, as it is presented in the above table, four factors of cultural identity were extracted because of having eigenvalues larger than 1 or close to 1 and they would explain ۹۶,۳۵۵ % of the variance.

The second way for extracting the suitable number of factors is by looking at the results of the Catell's scree test (Cattell, 1966) in which we should look for a change or break in the plot and keep the factors above the break or elbow. These results are displayed by the scree plot run by SPSS. Figure 1 indicates this scree plot.

Figure 1. *The scree plot of the factors of the study*

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

The last step in factor analysis is factor rotation to find which items have high loadings on which factors. Table 5 shows a summary of the results of factor rotation and item loadings.

Table 5. *Rotated Component Matrix*[a]

Items of questionnaire	**Rotated Components**			
	1	2	3	4
No. 1	0.188	0.229	0.213	0.921
No. 2	0.19	0.222	0.201	0.927
No. 4	0.18	0.23	0.189	0.919
No. 5	0.118	0.216	0.204	0.883
No. 6	0.183	0.225	0.234	0.915
No. 8	0.2	0.229	0.194	0.924
No. 9	0.951	0.161	0.102	0.147
No. 10	0.955	0.159	0.109	0.146
No. 11	0.934	0.162	0.158	0.137
No. 12	0.952	0.167	0.102	0.154
No. 13	0.959	0.152	0.097	0.139
No. 14	0.954	0.167	0.099	0.153
No. 15	0.957	0.155	0.099	0.143
No. 16	0.937	0.156	0.162	0.138
No. 17	0.173	0.921	0.182	0.224
No. 18	0.176	0.938	0.19	0.186
No. 19	0.2	0.905	0.184	0.203
No. 20	0.173	0.921	0.188	0.223
No. 21	0.174	0.924	0.183	0.217
No. 22	0.173	0.934	0.193	0.205

No. 23	0.187	0.91	0.196	0.19
No. 24	0.135	0.218	0.925	0.214
No. 25	0.123	0.187	0.944	0.173
No. 26	0.142	0.205	0.926	0.215
No. 27	0.123	0.195	0.944	0.178
No. 29	0.155	0.192	0.925	0.223
No. 30	0.122	0.185	0.942	0.185

As it is noted in table 5, each of the items had loadings on four remained factors after rotation hence confirming that the questionnaire in this study and its items correctly measured what they were supposed to measure.

On the whole, the findings in the pilot study supported the reliability and validity of the self-constructed questionnaire and as a result, it was ready to be applied for the confirmatory factor analysis.

Main Study

Participants

Due to the fact that the sample had to be large, available sampling was used. Therefore, the participants included 384 English language learners pursuing their studies at advanced level of proficiency in Safir English Language Institute in Tehran. The sample included 86 male and 298 female learners. The age range was 18 to 35.

Instrument

The instrument of the main phase of the study was the self-constructed questionnaire. As it was mentioned, the questionnaire went through the processes of checking for validity and reliability prior to be used in the main phase. The final questionnaire included 27 items. The reliability of the questionnaire was again calculated for the main sample (384 participants) with Cronbach's alpha reaching 0.891.

Data Collection Procedure

This phase consisted of gathering 384 participants' viewpoints through distributing the validated questionnaire among them. Filling out the questionnaire took almost 25 minutes and then they were gathered and the responses were analyzed by SPSS 22.

Data Analysis Procedure

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

The Correlational Phase

Since the last research question pertained to finding the possible relationship between Iranian advanced EFL learners' cultural identity and their English language achievement scores,

the ultimate phase of the present study was to find the answer of this question and to do so, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient needed to be run.

Participants

The same group of participants in the quantitative phase; 384 advanced EFL learners, took part in this phase.

Instrument

The instruments utilized in this phase consisted of the same cultural identity questionnaire with 27 items and Safir English Language Institute achievement test for the advanced level that is administered as the final exam at the end of each term. This achievement test contains 60 items; including vocabulary, grammar, reading, listening, and writing sections, and the maximum achievement score of the participants is 60 marks.

Data Collection Procedure

This phase consisted of concentrating on the data gathered from the cultural identity questionnaire filled out by 384 participants' as well as the data that were gathered by answering Safir English Language Institute achievement test for the advanced level containing 60 items with 60 marks. Answering the test took almost 85 minutes and after collecting the test papers, they were corrected, scored from 0 to 60, and were ready for being analyzed.

Data Analysis Procedure

After gathering the necessary data from both cultural identity questionnaire and Safir English Language Institute achievement test from 384 EFL learners, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was run.

Results

Qualitative Results

This part presents the data gathered through analyzing the interviews with 20 English learners.

Cultural Identity

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

Religious beliefs

1- We have some religious routines like taking part in events related to ***Moharram*** *and different* ***Eids*** *which are wonderful.*

2- Our religion has made us different from other nations. Most of us show that ***our religion is the best.***

3- Our religion is a ***distinctive feature*** *for Iranians.*

4- Our religion separates us from other nations.

Cultural attitudes

1- Iranians are very different from other nations because of the ***great culture and lifestyle they*** *have.*

2- ***I love Norooz, we set Haftsin*** *for that day which is great.*

3- Iranians have a lot of ***amazing traditions*** *that other countries don't have. For example, we have Norooz. We also have* ***Taarof*** *that most countries don't have.*

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

National attitudes

1- I'm ***proud of*** *being an Iranian.*

2- Of course some Iranians are living in other countries but I think they are still Iranians.

3- Being an Iranian is really good because I think ***we are special, smart, and kind.***

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

Language component

1- By caring about our language and speaking Farsi, we definitely present our culture and focus on ***how important it is to protect our culture.***

2- ***Farsi is a symbol of our rich and ancient history and civilization.***

3- Language is absolutely an important aspect of any cultures and Farsi is a symbol which represents our culture. In fact, language can identify the nationality of a country.

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

Quantitative Results

Checking the Reliability of the Questionnaire

To assure that the questionnaire had the acceptable reliability for being applied in the main phase, Cronbach's alpha was calculated again. Table 6 indicates the reliability of the questionnaire.

Table 6. *Cronbach's alpha report of the questionnaire*

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

As it is displayed in table 6, the Cronbach's alpha index is ۰,۸۹۱ which shows that the questionnaire and its four factors were acceptable.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Results

To check the validity of the model of cultural identity, the confirmatory factor analysis was applied using structural equation modeling (SEM). In fact, CFA is used to check the

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

Normality of the Factors

Prior to CFA, Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test (K-S test), which is a nonparametric test of the equality of one-dimensional probability distributions to compare a sample with a reference probability distribution, was used. Table 7 indicates the information regarding this test.

Table 7. *the results of K-S test for the factors of the study*

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

As it is displayed in table 7, K-S significance for all the factors is less than 0.05 and the amount of skewness and Kurtosis are between (-۲ و ۲). Thus, the normality of the data for all the factors was proved.

KMO Test

The factorability of the data can be checked through two statistical tests of Bartlett's test (Bartlett, 1954) which should be significant ($p < 0.05$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy minimum of which should be 0.6. The indexes of these two tests for this study are presented in table 8.

Table 8. *KMO and Bartlett's Test*

Cultural identity questionnaire	Bartlett's Test Sig.	KMO
1-27	0.000	0.892

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

Table 9 indicates all the relationships among factors in CFA. As it is clear, Beta is greater than 0.3 and T-value is more than 1.96.

Table 9. *β and T-Value of items of the questionnaire*

Factors	Items of questionnaire	B	T-Value

Religion	1	0.67	13.50
	2	0.65	12.92
	3	0.62	12.11
	4	0.61	11.96
	5	0.67	13.49
	6	0.51	11.24
Culture	7	0.69	14.37
	8	0.61	12.27
	9	0.66	13.72
	10	0.64	13.24
	11	0.65	13.47
	12	0.65	13.23
	13	0.60	12.16
	14	0.61	12.31
Nationality	15	0.66	13.60
	16	0.67	13.98
	17	0.73	15.6
	18	0.64	13.10
	19	0.72	15.35
	20	0.68	14.16
	21	0.70	14.73
Language	22	0.64	12.67
	23	0.57	11.08
	24	0.64	12.74
	25	0.59	11.47
	26	0.62	12.29

	27	0.61	11.94

Unstandardized Coefficients Diagram

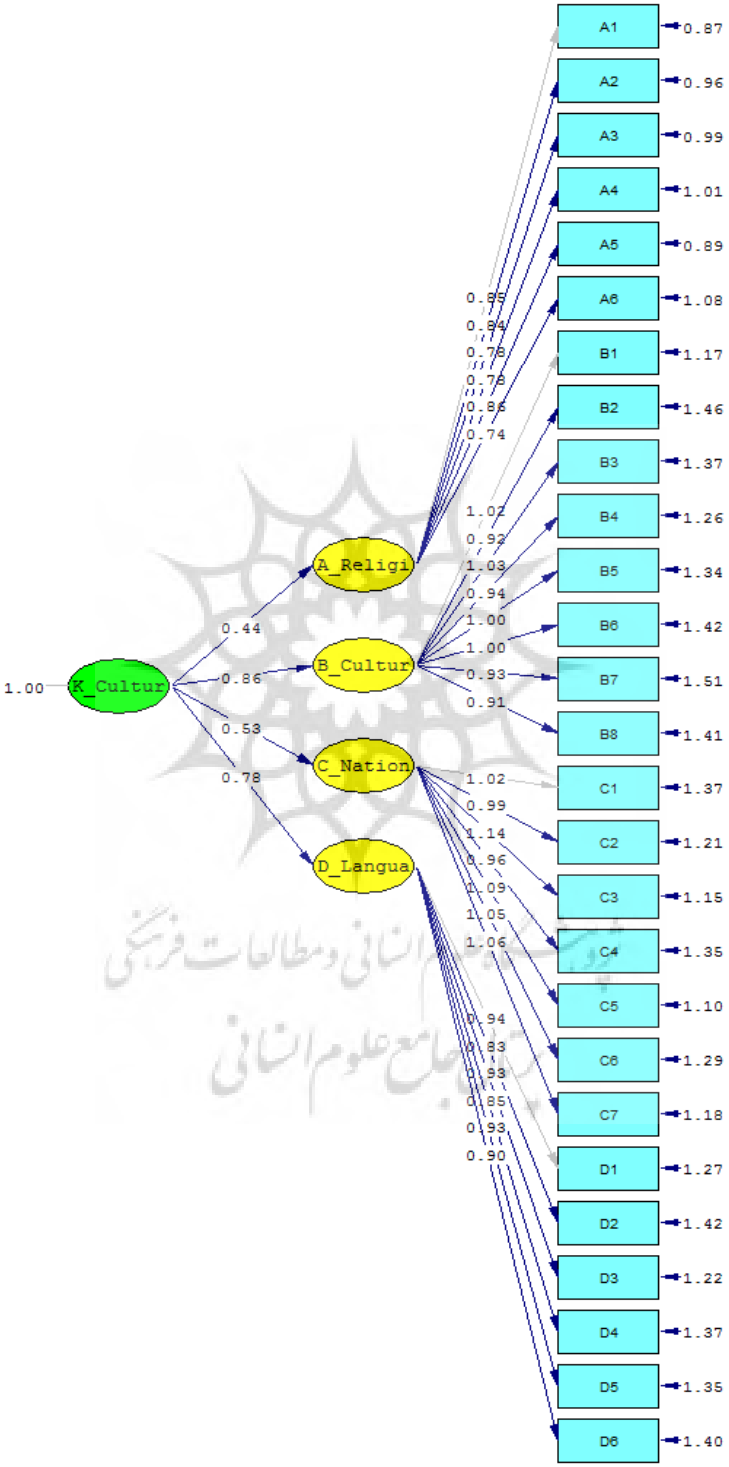


Figure 2. *Unstandardized coefficients diagram*

Standardized Coefficients Diagram

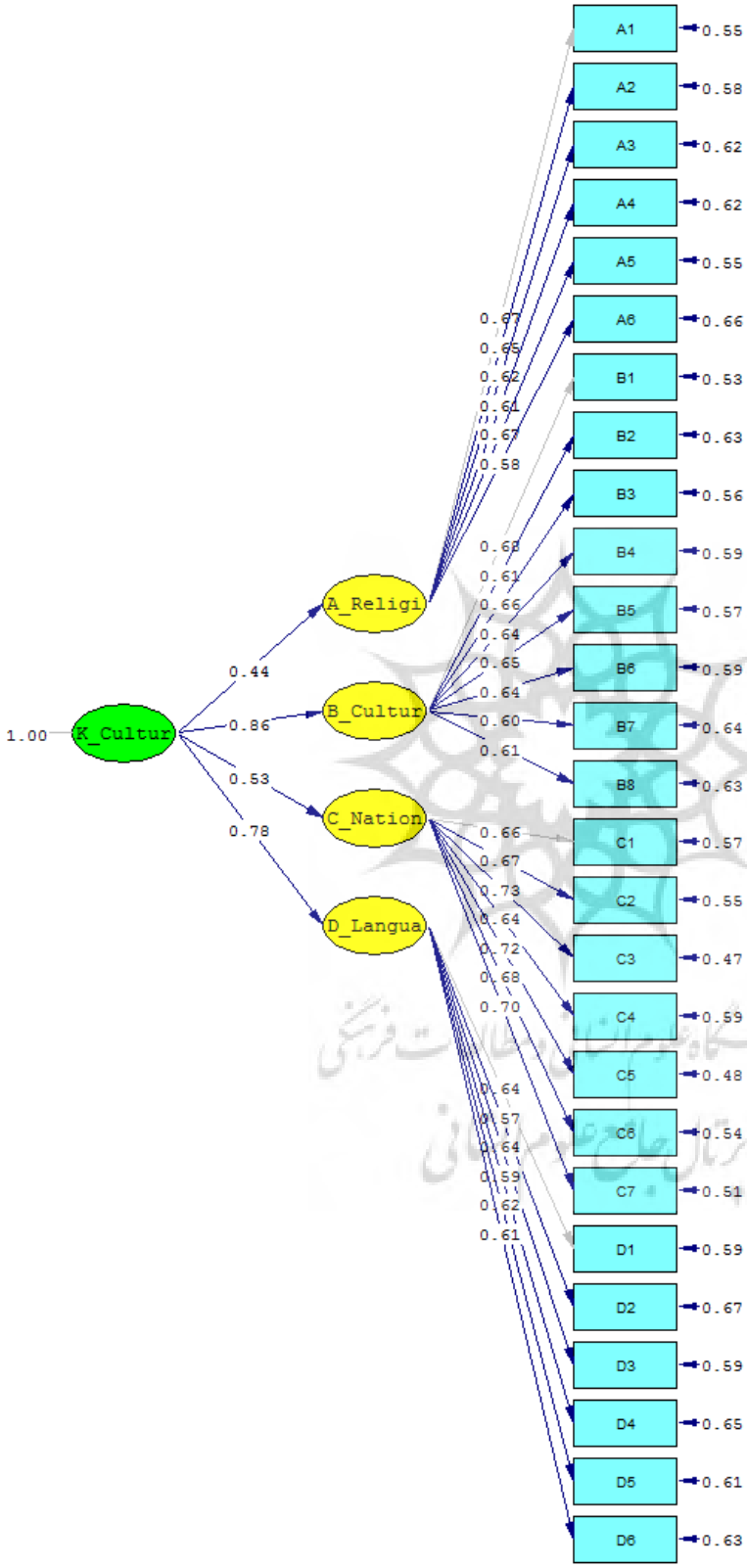


Figure 3. *Standardized coefficients diagram*

T-Values Diagram

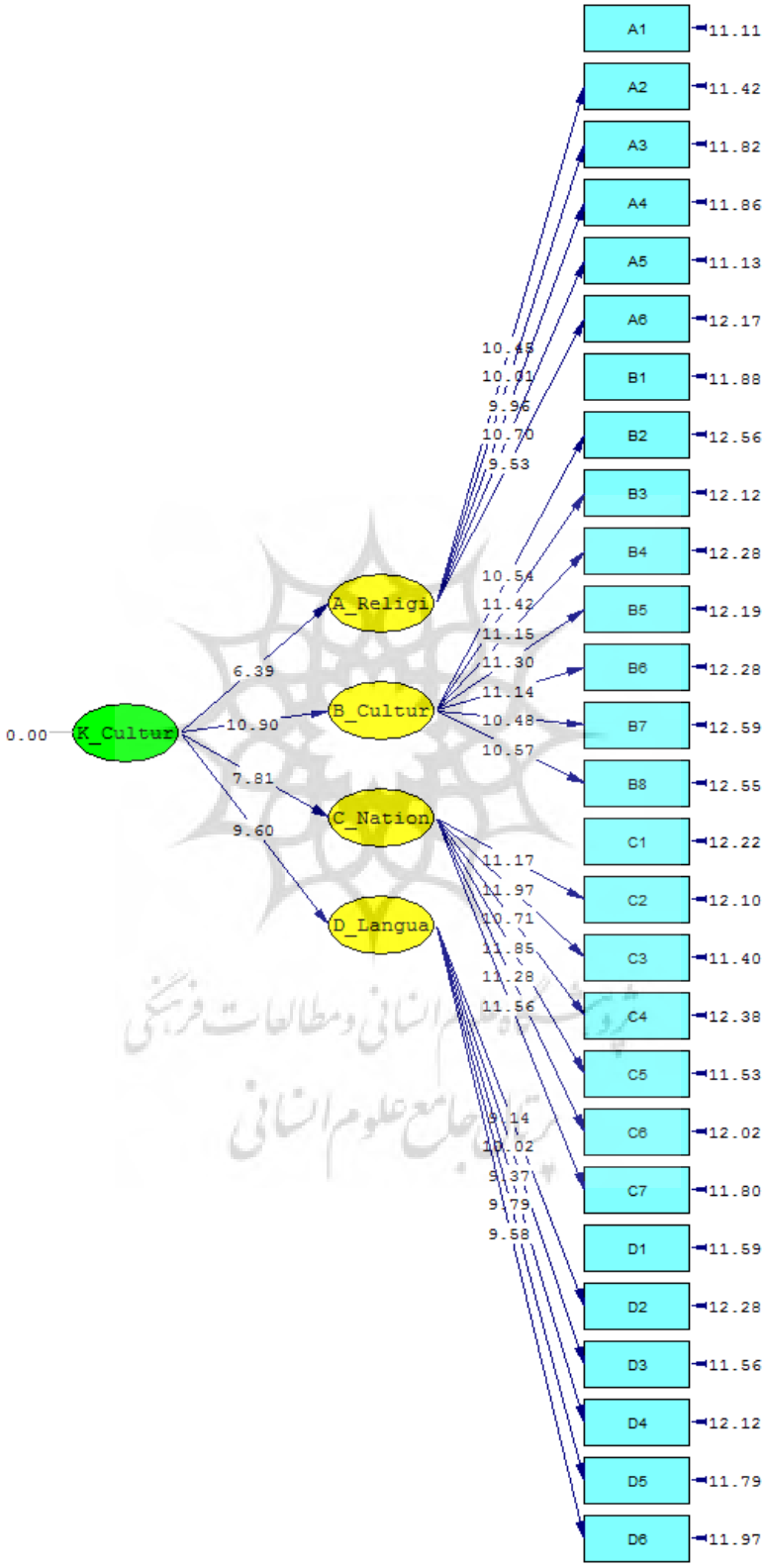


Figure 4. *T-values diagram*

Table 10. *The obtained and the acceptable fit indices*

Fit indices	RMSEA	Chi - square/df	SRMR	GFI	NFI	CFI	IFI	RFI
The acceptable value	0.08≥	≤ 3.00	≤ 0.08	0.9≤	0.9≤	0.9≤	0.9≤	0.9≤
The obtained value	0.043	1.705	0.047	0.90	0.94	0.97	0.97	0.93

To check the fit of the model to the data, some scholars, such as Jaccard and Wan (1996) suggested using indices from different classes because this strategy helps overcome the limitations of each index. As a result, the obtained values for fit indices (Table 10) were checked against the desired values. For RMSEA, according to Steiger (2007), an upper limit of 0.08 seems to be the general consensus among authorities in the area and as it is clear in Table 16, the obtained value in the present study is 0.043 which is less than 0.08. The relative chi-square that was calculated for this model was 1.705 which is less than the upper limit of 3.00 reported in Ullman and Bentler (2003) and the obtained GFI was 0.90. As it is noticeable from the above table of the fit indices, it can be concluded that the proposed model does fit to the data.

As the final step in this phase, β and T-Value of the variables were considered for the second time and it became clear that there was a significant relationship among the factors of the study due to the fact that β was positive and T-Value was more than 1.96.

Correlational Results

The last part of this study deals with the correlational phase which was carried out to figure out whether there was any possible relationship between cultural identity and language achievement among Iranian advanced EFL learners. To do so, the researcher used the data gathered in the quantitative phase in which the participants went through the questionnaire and also the data gathered when the same group of participants in the quantitative phase, who were 384 EFL learners, took Safir English Language Institute achievement test for the advanced level. Their scores were 0 to 60. To carry out this phase, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was run.

Table 11. *Relationship between cultural identity and language achievement scores*

Factors		Achievement Scores
Religion	Pearson Correlation	0.407
	P-Value	0.000
Culture	Pearson Correlation	0.585
	P-Value	0.000
Nationality	Pearson Correlation	0.539
	P-Value	0.000
Language	Pearson Correlation	0.534
	P-Value	0.000

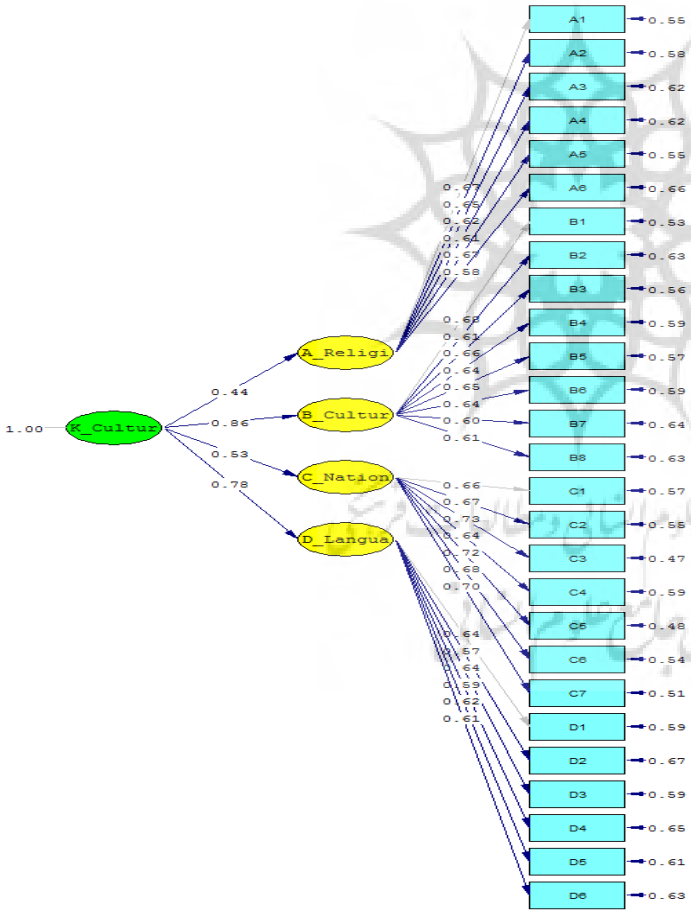
Cultural Identity	Pearson Correlation	0.729
	P-Value	0.000

According to table 11, there is a significant relationship between the variables of the study and that is because of P-Value being less than 0.05. Thus, all the factors of cultural identity have a positive relationship with language achievement scores that means if cultural identity gets enhanced, language achievement scores will increase and vice versa.

Answers to the Research Questions

Revisiting the First Research Question

To answer this research question, the results of the confirmatory factor analysis needed to be examined to check for the fit of the model. Different indices which are indicators of a model's good fit were calculated, many of which indicate that the model presented in the present study can be a valid one for future research. Therefore, the final model of Iranian advanced EFL learners' cultural identity can be presented in figure 5.



RMSEA: 0.043 , Chi-square/df : 1.705
SRMR :0.047 , GFI : 0.9
NFI : 0.94, CFI : 0.97, IFI: 0.97, RFI : 0.93

Figure 5. *The final model of cultural iden*

Revisiting the second Research Question

Based on the results of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient, it was realized that there was a positive relationship between EFL learners' cultural identity and their English language achievement. Therefore, the answer to the second research question of the study is positive.

Discussion

The fact that Iranian cultural identity had factorial structure was quite in line with previous studies done on cultural identity of Japanese and African participants. For instance, *The African American Acculturation Scale-Revised (AAAS-R)* developed by Klonoff and Landrine (2000) is an African cultural identity measure consisting of some factors like Religious Beliefs and Practices, Preference for Things, Interracial Attitudes, Cultural Superstitions, and Family Values.

The findings of the current study are in line with multiple studies (e.g., Alptekin, 2006; 2008; Oller, 1995), reporting the positive interconnectedness of cultural awareness and learners' performance in language learning. For instance, a study conducted by Alptekin (2006) showed that when learners are aware of the cultural norms, they can interpret the text better than when they are not. Duff and Uchida (1997) studied the relationship between language and culture, and the cultural identities of teachers and teaching practices. The results of their study showed that social, political, cultural, and professional identities of teachers are related to some complexities that are reflected in their classes. Ever since the focus of research on the relationship between language and culture inspired by theory of Linguistic Relativity and the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, some fields including Applied and Socio Linguistics have sought to shed more light on this relationship (Brantmeier, 2004). Based on these theories, the basic constituents of language cannot be separated from the users' viewpoints. Naqeeb (2012) has also focused on the impact of cultural aspects of target language in learning that language. Furthermore, Mao (2009) asserted that the importance of culture in L2 classrooms should be considered. The results of a study conducted by Sabatin (2013) also indicated significant differences between participants who are culturally aware and those who do not know anything in terms of their performance on reading comprehension.

However, the findings of this study are in contrast with a study conducted by Razmjoo (2010) showing no significant relationship between L2 achievement and the aspects of identity. The fact that Iranian cultural identity had a positive relationship with English language achievement is also in contrast with the concept of *social solidarity*. The theme "Social Solidarity" refers to the ties in social relations connecting people to one another, which measures the amount of talk happening between individuals (Pishghadam, Noghani, & Zabihi, 2011). Based on such concept, it can be explained that people with more score in cultural identity would enjoy more solidarity and hence would be less interested in foreign culture and language. In addition, the results of this study are in contrast with a study by Razmjoo and Mavaddat (2015) which revealed that identity did not have any impacts on the relationship between justice judgments and outcomes in EFL classes.

Conclusion

Some implications related to Iranian context of language teaching are listed below:

●Language teachers need to have adequate knowledge about Iranian model of cultural identity in EFL classes. They need to know what factor of cultural identity would affect learners in learning English language positively or negatively.

●Language teachers also need to be equipped with strategies to deal with challenges of conflicts between cultural identity and foreign language learning.

This study was suffering from some limitations. For instance, the variables of the study were measured through self-report measures like questionnaire that may impose some limitations. In self-report measures, participants report what they perceive as their true response. Therefore, it is possible that participants are not honest when answering or what they perceive as their true actions or feelings may not be the real actions or feelings. In addition, the research cannot guarantee that findings of the current study are directly related to cultural identity and second language learning. Various intervening variables that are characteristics of individuals can affect the nature of the relationship between cultural identity and English language learning.

Due to the fact that a comprehensive study is hardly achievable, the study was delimited in certain aspects. For instance, the sampling was convenient sampling, and participants were chosen from among the available learners. In addition, many of the questionnaires were distributed not by the researcher but by other instructors at the institute; consequently, this may have had some effects on the performance of the participants on the questionnaire.

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