



## Developing a Multi-Dimensional Conceptual Model Concerning the Challenges of the Current ELT Curriculum in Iran

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**Abstract:** In spite of the longitudinal attempts of the educational authorities, English has failed to have a proper position in the ELT educational system in Iran, resulting in the weak performance of Iranian EFL learners. As a result, this study was carried out to integrate sociocultural theory, multimodality theory, multiple intelligence theory, and social identity theory to develop a comprehensive conceptual model for understanding and overcoming ELT curriculum challenges. A transformative sequential mixed research design was adopted to explore the challenges, perceptions, and provision of the model. First of all, a total of 49 articles were selected from well-established journals to map the related challenges. The review and comparison processes were conducted based on Tricco et al.'s (2018) PRISMA\_SCR model (thematic analysis). The extracted categories of challenges were explored in relation to the principles of the four mentioned theories, and nine categories were selected to align with the principles of the mentioned theories. Then, 403 participants from three categories of stakeholders (pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and scholars) were chosen, and their perceptions were assessed through the administration of a researcher-developed Likert-scale questionnaire. Moreover, some interview questions were drawn up to guide the qualitative phase, and an observation checklist was developed to assist in monitoring ELT classroom practices (to confirm the extracted challenges and assure the validity of the questionnaire). The results, obtained through SPSS and SEM statistical platforms, revealed that all three groups of participants considered authenticity, lack of communicative skill, deficiency in teacher training programs, and malfunctioning assessment methods as the most important challenges. This study has highlighted the effect of the application of the principles of sociocultural and social identity theories in developing an optimal learning environment that is socially and culturally responsive. Moreover, the principles of multimodality theory have emphasized the positive effect of the application of different instructional resources in promoting engagement and development among EFL learners. On the other hand, the principles of multiple intelligence theory call for differentiated instruction and assessment to address various cognitive and emotional capacities of learners. By integrating sociocultural, social identity, multiple intelligence, and multimodality theories, this study has provided a holistic framework for reforming the most significant ELT curriculum challenges.

**Keywords:** Challenge, Conceptual Model, Curriculum, Educational Stakeholders, Perception.

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## Introduction

The demand for English learning is increasingly becoming a need for anyone who wants to interact globally. Many non-English-speaking countries have realized the strategic position of the English language in gaining an upper hand in the global economy (Curry & Lillis, 2022). Therefore, these countries have been forced to adopt policies aimed at improving the teaching and learning of the English language in the national curriculum and encouraging English-medium instructions in schools and universities (Zare & Anani Sarab, 2020).

In Iran, globalization has influenced language education policies by increasing the emphasis on English instruction. However, these changes have consistently been overshadowed by ideological opposition to English and English-speaking countries (Babaii, 2022; Tajeddin & Chamani, 2020). The Iranian government is aware of the need for its people to acquire a good command of English in order to compete in the global market (Kiany et al., 2010; Mirhosseini et al., 2021). However, the emphasis on English in the education systems is not without challenges. For example, the English learning textbooks have been significantly revised to implement communicative abilities during the last two decades; however, the traditional educational system of the country and the pressure imposed by the university entrance exam (Konkour) have resulted in significant obstacles in applying the CLT principles. Moreover, time constraints and lack of infrastructure (such as qualified and proficient teachers, sufficient physical resources, and financial issues) have hindered the full implementation of the intended teaching objectives (Moharami & Daneshfar, 2022). In fact, textbooks are merely a small part of the broader educational framework, proposed by the Ministry of Education, which is still concerned with traditional educational principles in various aspects of education, including language learning (Kiany et al., 2024). The language learning educational frameworks must highlight the balance between the involvement in social interactions, as a prerequisite of language learning, as well as the concentration on personal variations in identity, intelligence, family condition, physical characteristics, etc. (Bonacina-Pugh & Helot, 2023; Caporal-Ebersold, 2018; Grosjean, 2022). This issue has been of great care and importance during the last two decades, and various scholars, in numerous fields (from psychology and sociology to anthropology), have proposed and discussed different theories and ideas to highlight the multi-dimensional characteristic of the language learning process (Diamantopoulou & Ørevik, 2022; Lantolf & Poehner, 2023; Qasserras & Qasserras, 2023).

## Review of the Related Literature

This study has relied on several well-established theories, namely, the Sociocultural Theory, Multimodality Theory, Multiple Intelligence Theory, and Social Identity Theory. The mentioned theories were adopted by the researcher due to the fact that they were well-documented and had a rich presupposition, particularly for education. A large number of language learning curricula, developed in different countries, have been directly or indirectly influenced by the above-mentioned theories. As an example, the principles of [CEFR \(2013\)](#) emphasize the integration of educational concepts with cultural relationships and social norms. The mentioned framework aims to take into consideration social cohesion, cultural differences, political concerns, personal variations, and personal identity of individuals as a society member ([Council of Europe, 2022](#)). The CEFR pamphlet has directly highlighted the principles of Sociocultural Theory, Multimodality, Multiple Intelligence Theory, and Social Identity Theory. The policies and frameworks provided by Asian countries have also relied on the principles of the mentioned theories, for example, Indian policy makers have relied on the principles of Sociocultural and Multimodality Theories. The current reformation, in the Indian foreign language education framework, is based on a multilingual framework which is in favor of communicative learning theories integrated with humanistic and socio-cultural theories ([Kirsch, 2020](#); [Omidire & Ayob, 2020](#); [Vennela & Smith, 2019](#)). Policy makers in Turkey focused on the issues raised in Multiple Intelligence and Social Identity Theories ([Kirkgoz, 2009](#)), the policy makers in Saudi Arabia have emphasized Social Identity, Multimodality, and Multiple Intelligence Theories ([Payne & Almansour, 2014](#)). In other words, due to the nature of the study, the researcher attempted to delve into the theories that have been raised by other countries and can play a role in eliminating the challenges of the current language learning curriculum in Iran. In fact, the four mentioned theories provided the study with a set of appropriate and applicable concepts for revising and improving the language learning educational system. In order to meet the objective of the study, the following four research questions were proposed:

1. How can the Sociocultural Theory be observed in relation to the current ELT curriculum challenges in Iran, to create an optimal conceptual model for language instruction?
2. How can Multimodality Theory be observed in relation to the current ELT curriculum challenges in Iran, to create an optimal conceptual model for language instruction?

3. How can Multiple Intelligence Theory be observed in relation to the current ELT curriculum challenges in Iran, to create an optimal conceptual model for language instruction?
4. How can Social Identity Theory be observed in relation to the current ELT curriculum challenges in Iran, to create an optimal conceptual model for language instruction?

## Methods

### Design of the Study

A transformative sequential mixed research design was adopted to explore the challenges of the ELT curriculum in Iran. Through the mixed-method design, the qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were integrated to provide a comprehensive analysis of the challenges of the curriculum. The sequential process of this study was composed of various stages, including the literature review, exploration of participants' perceptions, analysis of the intended theories, and development of a conceptual model. Moreover, the transformative nature of the study provided some solutions for the raised challenges, which can act as a treatment for a patient (Freire, 1994; Habermas, 1989).

### Sampling and Participants

In the present study, the sample was selected from the various stakeholders involved in the field of ELT in Iran. They were ELT scholars, in-service teachers, and pre-service teachers. The scholars (N= 10) were selected based on the analysis of their educational background, research works, and experience in ELT curriculum design and implementation. They were the university lecturers and educational supervisors working in the Ministry of Education. The in-service (N= 269) and pre-service (N= 124) teachers were selected through the convenience sampling method. In-service teachers were selected from the various educational institutions across Iran. Pre-service teachers were the students involved in training programs in Farhangian universities.

### Instruments and Materials

In order to have a systematic review of the literature, the relevant studies on ELT curriculum challenges were gathered through the strategy of inclusion/exclusion criteria. Therefore, some issues such as the publication year (btw 2000 and the present time), type of journal (ISI or Scopus journals), and keywords (e.g., ELT curriculum challenges or problems,

syllabus challenges or shortcomings, FLTP, English language teaching in Iran) were taken into account during the process of selection. Then, a data extraction list was developed to explore each study on three specific fields: a) bibliographic information of the author, year of publication, and title of the article; b) methodological information such as research design, sample size, and instruments; c) key findings on ELT curriculum challenges. The review process was in accordance with the framework proposed by [Tricco et al. \(2018\)](#) called the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA ScR). The above-discussed framework includes various steps (preparing a priori protocol, identifying the sources of information, choosing the samples based on the eligibility criteria, screening the samples, classifying and analyzing the data, and comparing the obtained results) that could help the researcher in organizing the issues and ideas while carrying out thematic analysis. The selected studies were reviewed and synthesized in order to identify the language learning challenges in the current educational system in Iran. The derived challenges were summed up and categorized into eleven subcategories:

1. Lack of Authentic and Engaging Content
2. Inadequate Development of Communicative Skills
3. Absence of Cultural and Social Contexts
4. Overemphasis on Exam Preparation
5. Rigid and Centralized Educational System
6. Insufficient Teacher Training and Support
7. Political Constraints
8. Misalignment Between Policy and Classroom Practice
9. Inadequate Assessment Methods
10. Economic and Funding Restrictions
11. Lack of (Teachers' or Students') Personal Motivation.

Then, the extracted challenges were explored considering the four educational and instructional theories (Sociocultural, Multimodality, Multiple Intelligence, and Social Identity Theories). Therefore, as a result of the subjective and qualitative exploration of the extracted challenges and the principles of the educational theories, the researcher could come to nine challenges that were significantly affecting the quality of language teaching and learning in the ELT educational system in Iran.

In the next stage, a researcher-made questionnaire (developed based on the nine identified challenges) was developed to gather the intended quantitative data about the participants' perception of the ELT curriculum challenges in Iran. The intended questionnaire



was composed of two different sections. The first section was concerned with demographic information of the participants and their teaching or learning experience. The second part of the questionnaire was concerned with the perceptions of the participants about the challenges in the current ELT curriculum in Iran. This section was composed of 63 five-point Likert-scale items measuring the agreement and disagreement with the issues raised in each statement about curriculum challenges (seven items for each challenge).

However, each instrument must be validated by experienced and trustworthy experts. Therefore, the initial piloting was done by three experts. The scholars were the supervisors and advisors of the study who had their Ph.D. degrees in TEFL, and they were considered university instructors for more than two decades. The mentioned scholars started the initial piloting process, trying to eliminate the redundant items, revise and merge some nearly related items, and modify the structure and format of the questionnaire. All the collected comments were studied and implemented in the questionnaire by the researcher. After the initial piloting process, the long draft of the questionnaire was reduced to a 69-item pamphlet composed of 63 challenge items and 6 autobiographical items. The questionnaire was shortened and revised in a way to require about 15 to 29 minutes of completion time. This was done due to the fact that the longer the questionnaire was, the lower the return rate would be (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009). Next, the questionnaire was provided to four in-service teachers involved in senior high schools in Yazd for further validation. The selected teachers had M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in TEFL, and they were teaching English in high schools for five to twenty-two years, with an age range of 30 to 44. The main purpose of the second piloting phase was to provide the questionnaire to a sample of participants from the intended population to identify any potential shortcomings of this instrument in the main field of the study. Finally, the revised version of the questionnaire was again provided to the supervisor, and after his ultimate approval, it was ready to be copied in paper drafts and implemented in a computerized Google Form version. Moreover, internal consistency (Reliability), in this study, was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha via SPSS, from which the reliability of the total 63-questionnaire was recorded as  $\alpha = 0.958$ . Each category was determined to have adequate reliability, with values of Cronbach's Alpha at 0.695 to 0.875. Following the initial development, validation (through interview and observation sessions), and piloting procedures, Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted, supported by an adequate determinant value of 6.60. As well, with a KMO value of 0.948 and a  $p = .000$  significant Bartlett's test, the data quality for factor analysis was confirmed.

## Data Collection Procedure

The current study has employed a step-by-step process in addressing various dimensions of the challenges of the ELT curriculum in Iran. The first step was reviewing the research studies related to ELT-related challenges within the Iranian context. These studies were carefully analyzed using codification and thematic analysis for their clarity and accuracy in the identification of the challenges. From the challenges that were highlighted in those studies and the most frequently cited education theories relevant to them (Sociocultural, Multimodality, Multiple Intelligence, and Social Identity Theories), a Likert-scale questionnaire was formulated. Interview questions were also drawn up to guide the qualitative phase, and an observation checklist was developed to assist in monitoring ELT classroom practices (to confirm the extracted challenges and assure the validity of the questionnaire). Then, participants across various stakeholder groups were chosen to be included in the questionnaire. Finally, quantitative and qualitative information collected through literature review, questionnaire responses, interviews, and classroom observations were analyzed and interpreted to investigate a range of dimensions of language learning challenges in Iran.

## Results

### Analysis of the Participants' Perceptions

In order to have a detailed and systematic analysis of the results, there was a need to consider the performance of all the pre-service teachers on the questionnaire items. Therefore, a repeated-measure ANOVA was carried out. Table 1 provides the descriptive results on the performance of pre-service teachers on questionnaire items.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Results on the Challenge Selection by Pre-Service Teachers

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
authenticity	20.7661	6.23537	124
Communicative skills	20.1452	5.99552	124
Sociocultural context	18.8306	6.52665	124
Exam emphasis	17.4435	5.14553	124
Rigid system	19.1371	4.61939	124
Teacher training	20.1452	5.70365	124
Political constraints	17.9032	4.34380	124
Policy/practice misalignment	19.1935	4.14901	124
Assessment method	19.8952	5.31422	124

The descriptive statistics, demonstrated in Table 1, provide insights into the mean and standard deviation of various challenges perceived by pre-service teachers. The highest mean score is associated with authenticity ( $M = 20.77$ ,  $SD = 6.23$ ), indicating a strong recognition of its importance among the participants. Then, it is closely followed by communicative skills ( $M = 20.15$ ,  $SD = 5.99$ ) and teacher training ( $M = 20.15$ ,  $SD = 5.70$ ), suggesting their prominence in shaping educational outcomes. However, the significance of these challenges needs to be examined through multivariate tests provided in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Multivariate Results on the Challenge Selection by Pre-Service Teachers

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
challenge	Pillai's Trace	.445	11.632 <sup>c</sup>	8.000	116.000	.000	.445
	Wilks' Lambda	.555	11.632 <sup>c</sup>	8.000	116.000	.000	.445
	Hotelling's Trace	.802	11.632 <sup>c</sup>	8.000	116.000	.000	.445
	Roy's Largest Root	.802	11.632 <sup>c</sup>	8.000	116.000	.000	.445

The multivariate tests, presented in Table 2, show the combined effect of challenges on the outcome. The results revealed significant effects of the challenges (Wilks' Lambda = 0.555,  $F(8) = 11.632$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Moreover, the partial eta squared value of 0.445 suggested that 44.5% of the variance in the dependent variables is explained by these challenges. These results confirm the multidimensional impact of the identified factors on educational effectiveness.

The pairwise results demonstrated that certain challenges, such as authenticity ( $M = 20.76$ ,  $SD = 6.24$ ), communicative skills (Mean = 20.14,  $SD = 5.99$ ), and teacher training ( $M = 20.14$ ,  $SD = 5.70$ ), were the most frequently highlighted ones by the participants, and they were significantly higher than the other ones.

Now, there was a need to run a one-way repeated measures ANOVA to identify whether in-service perceptions significantly varied across the identified challenges and the magnitude of these differences. Table 3 provides the descriptive results on the performance of in-service teachers on questionnaire items.



**Table 3.** Descriptive Results on the Challenge Selection by In-Service Teachers

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
authenticity	19.8178	5.45746	269
Communicative skills	18.9926	5.07113	269
Sociocultural context	18.1487	5.72050	269
Exam emphasis	17.0409	4.35057	269
Rigid system	18.9405	4.29120	269
Teacher training	19.4535	5.09121	269
Political constraints	17.7175	3.97404	269
Policy/practice misalignment	18.7398	4.37760	269
Assessment method	19.3569	4.84296	269

As it is demonstrated in Table 3, the descriptive statistics provide insights into the mean and standard deviation of various challenges perceived by in-service teachers. Authenticity ( $M = 19.82$ ,  $SD = 5.46$ ) indicated the highest mean score among the participants. Then, it was followed by teacher training ( $M = 19.45$ ,  $SD = 5.09$ ) and assessment method ( $M = 19.35$ ,  $SD = 4.84$ ), suggesting their prominence in shaping educational outcomes. However, the significance of these challenges needs to be examined through multivariate tests provided in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Multivariate Results on the Challenge Selection by In-Service Teachers

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
challenge	Pillai's Trace	.368	18.981 <sup>c</sup>	8.000	261.000	.000	.368
	Wilks' Lambda	.632	18.981 <sup>c</sup>	8.000	261.000	.000	.368
	Hotelling's Trace	.582	18.981 <sup>c</sup>	8.000	261.000	.000	.368
	Roy's Largest Root	.582	18.981 <sup>c</sup>	8.000	261.000	.000	.368

The multivariate tests, presented in Table 4, revealed significant effects of the challenges (Wilks' Lambda = 0.632,  $F(8) = 18.981$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Moreover, the partial eta squared value of 0.368 suggested that 36.8 % of the variance in the dependent variables is explained by these challenges.

The pairwise results revealed that certain challenges, such as Authenticity ( $M = 19.82$ ,  $SD = 5.46$ ), teacher training ( $M = 19.45$ ,  $SD = 5.09$ ), and assessment methods ( $M = 19.35$ ,

SD = 4.84), were the most frequently highlighted ones by the participants, and they were significantly higher than the other ones. Therefore, in-service teachers considered the above-mentioned challenges as the most influential shortcomings in the current ELT educational curriculum.

Again, there was a need to run a one-way repeated measures ANOVA to identify the scholars' perceptions. Table 5 provides the descriptive results on the performance of scholars on questionnaire items.

**Table 5.** Descriptive Results on the Challenge Selection by Scholars

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
authenticity	18.2000	3.32666	10
Communicative skills	19.0000	3.46410	10
Sociocultural context	14.8000	3.48967	10
Exam emphasis	17.0000	3.71184	10
Rigid system	16.7000	3.36815	10
Teacher training	18.0000	1.88562	10
Political constraints	15.6000	2.45855	10
Policy/practice misalignment	15.3000	3.05687	10
Assessment method	17.8000	2.09762	10

The descriptive statistics, provided in Table 5, revealed that communicative skills (M = 19.00, SD = 3.46) indicated the highest mean score among the participants. Then, it was followed by authenticity (M = 18.20, SD = 3.32), teacher training (M = 18.00, SD = 1.88), and assessment method (M = 19.35, SD = 4.84). The significance of these challenges needs to be examined through multivariate tests provided in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Multivariate Results on the Challenge Selection by Scholars

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
challenge	Pillai's Trace	.996	60.394 <sup>c</sup>	8.000	2.000	.016	.996
	Wilks' Lambda	.004	60.394 <sup>c</sup>	8.000	2.000	.016	.996
	Hotelling's Trace	241.575	60.394 <sup>c</sup>	8.000	2.000	.016	.996
	Roy's Largest Root	241.575	60.394 <sup>c</sup>	8.000	2.000	.016	.996

The multivariate tests, presented in Table 6, revealed significant effects of the challenges (Wilks' Lambda = 0.004,  $F(8) = 60.394$ ,  $p = 0.016$ ). Moreover, the partial eta squared value of 0.996 suggested that 99.6 % of the variance in the dependent variables is explained by these challenges.

The pairwise results revealed that certain challenges, such as communicative skills ( $M = 19.00$ ,  $SD = 3.46$ ), authenticity ( $M = 18.20$ ,  $SD = 3.32$ ), teacher training ( $M = 18.00$ ,  $SD = 1.88$ ), and assessment method ( $M = 19.35$ ,  $SD = 4.84$ ), were the most frequently highlighted ones by the participants, and they were significantly higher than the other ones.

In order to have a holistic view of the perceptions of the stakeholders in different groups, a one-way between-group analysis of variance (One-Way Between-Group ANOVA) was conducted. Considering the presupposed assumptions, it was revealed that the homogeneity of the variance, obtained through Levene's Test, was not violated ( $p = 0.112$ ). Table 7 provides the variance results on the total scores in the three expertise groups.

**Table 7.** Variance Results on the General Performance of the Participants on the Questionnaire

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5315.333	2	2657.667	2.099	.124
Within Groups	506393.540	400	1265.984		
Total	511708.873	402			

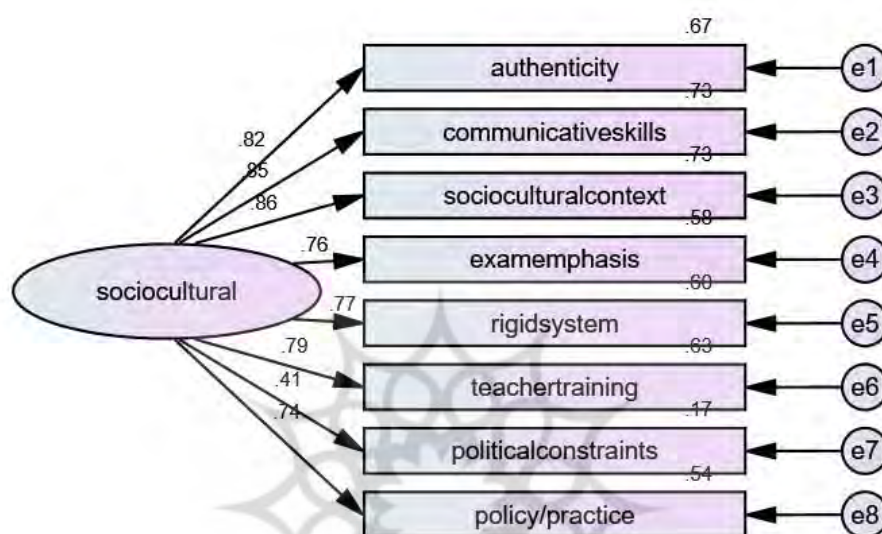
As represented in Table 7, experienced teachers ( $M = 168.21$ ,  $SD = 33.99$ ), pre-service teachers ( $M = 173.46$ ,  $SD = 39.69$ ), and scholars ( $M = 152.40$ ,  $SD = 18.46$ ) did not reveal any significant between-group variability (Sum of Squares = 5315.3;  $F = 2.099$ ;  $p$ -value = 0.124) in their total scores on the questionnaire. Moreover, the multiple comparisons results obtained through Tukey's HSD test demonstrated that none of the pairwise differences between the groups were statistically significant.

### Model Development Process

As mentioned previously, this study was concerned with the integration of sociocultural, multimodality, multiple intelligence, and social identity theories to create a comprehensive conceptual model for understanding and overcoming ELT curriculum challenges. In order to develop the intended model, the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique was taken into account.

### Unidimensional Model Based on the Principles of Sociocultural Theory

The first SEM analysis examined how sociocultural factors influence a series of challenges in the educational system, including authenticity, communicative skills, sociocultural context, exam emphasis, rigid system, teacher training, political constraints, and policy-practice misalignment. The model examined direct relationships using Maximum Likelihood Estimation. The relationships between the principles of sociocultural theory and the intended latent variables (challenges) are represented visually in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** SEM Model Representing the Relationships between the Principles of Sociocultural Theory and Curriculum Challenges

Moreover, Table 8 shows the statistical results on the impact of sociocultural theory on the intended latent variables (challenges).

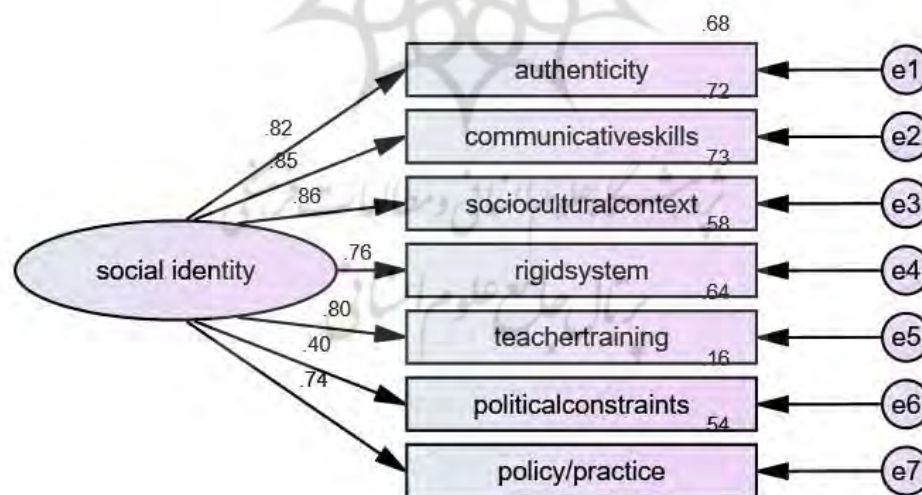
**Table 8.** Results on the Impact of Sociocultural Factors on Curriculum Challenges

			Estimate
authenticity	<---	sociocultural	.818
communicativeskills	<---	sociocultural	.854
socioculturalcontext	<---	sociocultural	.856
examemphasis	<---	sociocultural	.758
rigidsystem	<---	sociocultural	.775
teachertraining	<---	sociocultural	.792
politicalconstraints	<---	sociocultural	.413
policypracticemisalignment	<---	sociocultural	.737

According to the results represented in Table 8, sociocultural factors show the greatest impact on sociocultural context (0.856), communicative skills (0.854), authenticity (0.818), and teacher training (0.792). On the other hand, political constraints (0.413) are the least explained. Of course, sociocultural factors have a significant impact on all of the measured educational system Challenges (all above 0.300). Therefore, the results reveal that the principles of the sociocultural theory coordinated with the challenges aligned with this theory at the first stage of the study. These results reveal that paying attention to sociocultural factors could possibly improve a lot of challenges in the current curriculum, particularly teaching practices and content authenticity (although political factors may need separate or additional attention).

### Unidimensional Model Based on the Principles of Social Identity Theory

The second SEM analysis was concerned with the effect of the principles of the social identity theory on a series of challenges in the current curriculum design structure. The model examined direct relationships using Maximum Likelihood Estimation. The relationships between the principles of sociocultural theory and the associated challenges are represented visually in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** SEM Model Representing the Relationships between the Principles of Social Identity Theory and Curriculum Challenges

Table 9 provides the statistical results on the impact of social identity theory on the intended latent variables (challenge).



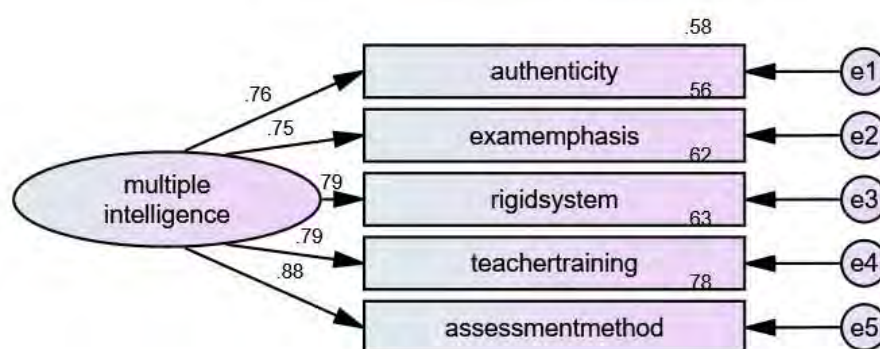
**Table 9.** Results on the Impact of Social Identity Factors on Curriculum Challenges

			Estimate
authenticity	<---	socialidentity	.825
communicativeskills	<---	socialidentity	.849
socioculturalcontext	<---	socialidentity	.857
rigidsystem	<---	socialidentity	.764
teachertraining	<---	socialidentity	.801
politicalconstraints	<---	socialidentity	.402
policypracticemisalignment	<---	socialidentity	.737

The numerical results represented in Table 9 show that the principles of social identity theory had significant effects on the challenges associated with them during the first stage of the study (all above 0.300). The point worth noting is that the most frequently selected challenges (by different groups of stakeholders) obtained the highest scores in Maximum Likelihood Estimation. Therefore, sociocultural context (0.857), communicative skills (0.849), authenticity (0.825), and teacher training (0.801) were the most correlated challenges.

### Unidimensional Model Based on the Principles of Multiple Intelligence Theory

The effect of the principles of the multiple intelligence theory on a series of challenges in the current curriculum design structure was represented in the third model developed by SEM analysis. The model examined direct relationships using Maximum Likelihood Estimation. The relationships between the principles of multiple intelligence theory and the associated challenges are represented visually in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** SEM Model Representing the Relationships between the Principles of Multiple Intelligence Theory and Curriculum Challenges

The statistical results on the impact of multiple intelligence theory on the intended latent variables (challenges) are represented in Table 10.

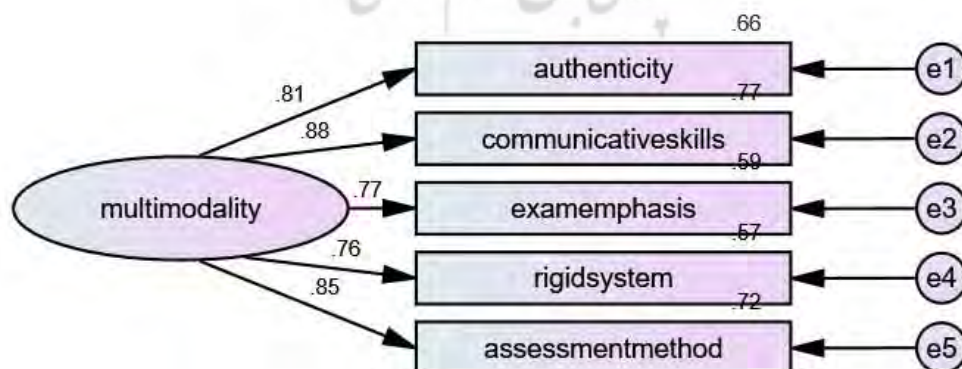
**Table 10.** Results on the Impact of Multiple Intelligence Factors on Curriculum Challenges

			Estimate
authenticity	<---	multipleintelligence	.764
examemphasis	<---	multipleintelligence	.750
rigidsystem	<---	multipleintelligence	.789
teachertraining	<---	multipleintelligence	.793
assessmentmethod	<---	multipleintelligence	.881

Based on the results represented in Table 10, multiple intelligence factors show the greatest impact on assessment method (0.881), teacher training (0.793), and rigid system (0.789). Of course, multiple intelligence factors have a significant impact on all of the measured Challenges (all above 0.300). Therefore, the results reveal that the principles of the multiple intelligence theory coordinated with the challenges aligned with this theory at the first stage of the study.

#### Unidimensional Model Based on the Principles of Multimodality Theory

The last SEM analysis was concerned with the effect of the principles of the multimodality theory on a series of challenges in the current curriculum design structure. The relationships between the principles of multimodality theory and the associated challenges are represented visually in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** SEM Model Representing the Relationships between the Principles of Multimodality Theory and Curriculum Challenges

The statistical results on the impact of multimodality theory on the intended latent variables (challenges) are represented in Table 11.

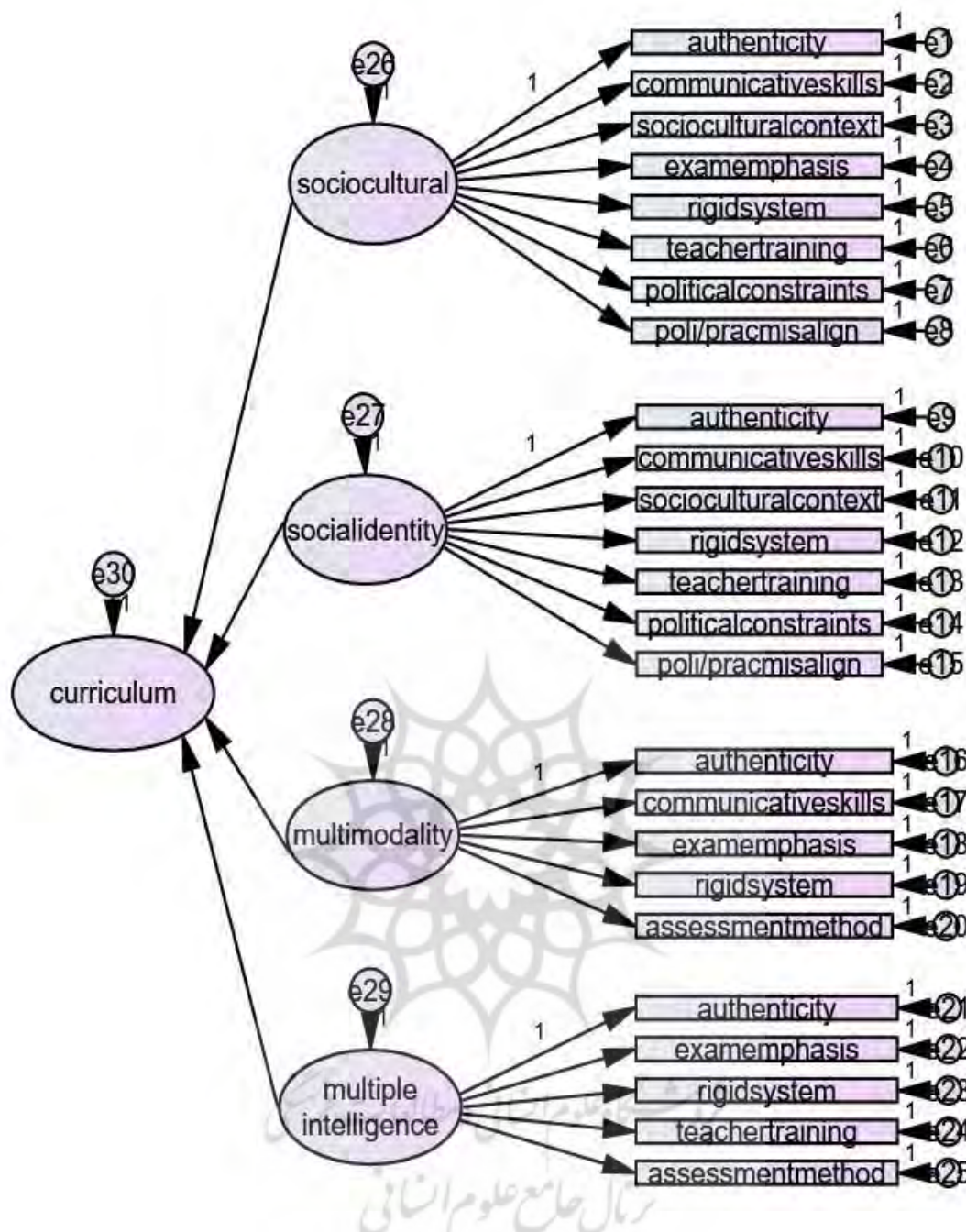
**Table 11.** Results on the Impact of Multimodality Factors on Curriculum Challenges

			Estimate
authenticity	<---	multimodality	.811
communicativeskills	<---	multimodality	.877
examemphasis	<---	multimodality	.767
rigidsystem	<---	multimodality	.756
assessmentmethod	<---	multimodality	.849

As represented in Table 11, communicative skills (0.877) have the highest path coefficient, suggesting that multimodal instructional approaches can significantly enhance students' communicative capabilities. Assessment method (0.849) also shows a strong relationship, indicating that multimodality plays a key role in shaping assessment strategies. Moreover, authenticity (0.811) demonstrates a substantial influence, meaning multimodal approaches contribute to creating more authentic learning experiences. Exam emphasis (0.767) and rigid system (0.756) exhibit slightly lower, but still strong, path coefficients.

### **Multidimensional Model Based on the Principles of the Four Mentioned Theories**

As it was represented in the previous four models developed through running SEM analysis, the challenges, attributed to the corresponding theories, significantly correlated with the principles and grounding of the mentioned theories. Therefore, the numerical statistics revealed high levels of correlation between the principles of the mentioned theories and the ideas presented in the latent variables (challenges). Till here, each theory and the related challenges were analyzed separately in order to be understandable and more tangible for the audience. However, the more comprehensive model can be summarized in the form of Figure 5.



**Figure 5.** SEM Model Representing the Relationships between the Principles of the Theories and Curriculum Design

As can be observed in Figure 5, the curriculum design and reformation process can be significantly affected by the four mentioned theories. These theories can help curriculum developers and syllabus designers overcome the current challenges of the ELT educational curriculum since their principles are in line with the ideas that can eliminate the shortcomings observed in the current ELT educational system. As mentioned previously, the relationship and correspondence between the challenges and principles of dimension theories are analyzed



and approved by running the same analysis in the previous models. However, Table 12 reveals the statistical results and the holistic effect of each theory on the curriculum design and reformation process.

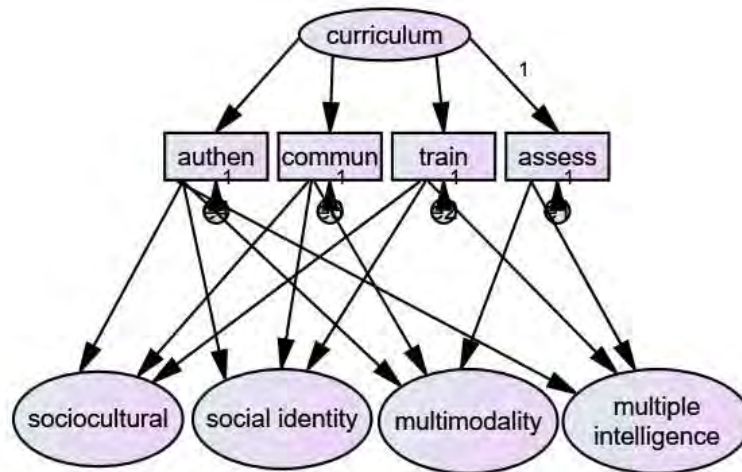
**Table 12.** Results on the Impact of the Theories on Addressing Curriculum Challenges

			Estimate
sociocultural	<---	curriculum	1.001
socialidentity	<---	curriculum	.994
multimodality	<---	curriculum	.964
multipleintelligence	<---	curriculum	.971

According to the numerical results observed in Table 12, there is a high level of correlation between each theory and curriculum. The path coefficient between curriculum and sociocultural theory is 1.001, indicating an almost perfect association, suggesting that changes in the curriculum based on the sociocultural perspectives can strongly influence the educational results. The social identity theory path coefficient (0.994) shows a similarly strong effect, meaning that curriculum modifications based on identity-related aspects of learning can help eliminate the related challenges. The multimodality theory path coefficient (0.964) suggests that the curriculum can substantially contribute to the integration of multimodal instructional approaches to reach more fruitful results. The multiple intelligence theory path coefficient (0.971) implies a strong influence of multiple intelligences on curriculum design and reformation.

Although the model, represented in Figure 5, provides a comprehensive visual picture of the relationship between the theories, challenges, and curriculum design, the results obtained by the administration of the questionnaires among the ELT scholars, in-service teachers, and pre-service teachers showed the views of these stakeholders about the most significant challenges. Based on the obtained statistical findings and the confirmatory results obtained through the administration of interviews and observation sessions, a more compact model can be developed, highlighting the gist of the study. Figure 6 demonstrates the results in this regard.





**Figure 6.** Model Representing the Relationships between the Principles of the Theories, Curriculum Design, and the Most Important Challenges

As represented in Figure 6, certain challenges, such as communicative skills, authenticity, teacher training, and assessment method, were the most frequently highlighted ones by the participants. These challenges corresponded with the principles of the most explored theories. This model shows that the mentioned theories can help eliminate the most frequent challenges observed in the current ELT curriculum.

## Discussion

This study was concerned with the development of a conceptual model to understand the needs of the current ELT curriculum in relation to the extracted challenges, drawing on the Sociocultural, Multimodality, Multiple Intelligence, and Social Identity Theories. It is worth noting that the application of sociocultural, multimodality, multiple intelligence, and social identity theories to an ELT curriculum presents a multidimensional approach to explore the challenges of the language instruction curriculum in Iran. The SEM results, in this study, confirm the mapping of these theoretical frameworks onto the identified challenges. This correspondence between the principles of the theories and the derived challenges enforces the idea that these theories can be used in curriculum change programs. For instance, the model indicated that sociocultural factors had the most significant impact on the sociocultural context, communicative skills, authenticity, and teacher training. These findings are in line with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which highlights the contribution of social interactions to learning. Previous studies (Azizifar et al., 2010; Gheitasi et al., 2020; Gholami Pasand & Ghasemi, 2018; Heidari et al., 2015; Maghsoudi & Khodamoradi, 2023;

Mirhosseini & Miryouness Haghi, 2023; Moharami & Daneshfar, 2022; Pishghadam & Zabihi, 2012) have also pointed out that sociocultural factors can positively affect the language learning process.

Moreover, the results indicate that social identity factors significantly influence sociocultural context, communicative competence, authenticity, and teacher education. These findings confirm the theoretical principle provided in Tajfel and Turner's (1986) social identity theory, which argues that the identities of the learners can shape and are shaped by the learning environment. This argument is supported by Norton and Toohey's (2011) research explaining the role learners' identities play in their engagement with language learning. Also, Pavlenko and Norton (2007) argue that language learners construct their social identities through classroom interactions, and these, in turn, affect their communicative competence. Compared to these works, the present study confirms the necessity of incorporating social identity approaches in ELT curricula for more effectively addressing inclusivity, learner motivation, and cultural representation.

Analysis of multiple intelligence variables indicated their strongest impact on assessment methods, teachers' training, and rigid system constraints. The findings confirm Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences, which supports the multiplication of instructional strategies to address learners' various cognitive strengths. In line with Meylani (2024), this study confirms that traditional language testing fails to address the diverse intelligence profiles of learners. The current findings confirm the need to shift from rigid curriculum designs to more dynamic, learner-oriented ones.

Moreover, the findings showed that multimodality had a significant impact on communicative competence, assessment methods, and authenticity. The outcome is in line with the theory of multimodality of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001), which calls for the use of diverse semiotic resources (e.g., pictures, gestures, computer technology) in language education. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) believed that multimodal practices enhance communicative competence since they provide learners with more than one way of processing and producing language. The present findings validate this fact and also emphasize the reality that multimodal practices can lead to more authentic experiences, making ELT more engaging and interesting.

The combined SEM model shows the strong correlation of each of the four theories to curriculum change, with sociocultural theory and social identity theory having the most impact. The holistic findings of this study are in line with current approaches (Canagarajah, 2006; Ghasemi Bagherabadi & Mazdayasna, 2021; Kumaravadivelu, 2012) advocating

post-method pedagogy, which combines multiple theoretical traditions to offer a holistic solution to language learning challenges.

Unlike previous research, this study has made a novel contribution by demonstrating how the theories in combination inform curriculum development. Unlike single-theory solutions for each challenge (e.g., sociocultural theory for authenticity or multiple intelligences for assessment), this study has emphasized the interdependence of curriculum components.

## Conclusion

As mentioned previously, this study has provided a critical look at the most significant challenges in Iran's ELT curriculum and demonstrated how sociocultural, multimodality, multiple intelligence, and social identity theories can offer promising solutions. The findings have revealed that the most critical issues (poverty of authentic content, deficiency in the development of proper communicative skills, traditional and ineffective assessment methods, and lack of sufficient and effective teacher training programs) are strictly interwoven in principles and grounding and require a multidisciplinary theoretical framework for successful reform.

This study highlights the effect of the application of the principles of sociocultural and social identity theories in developing an optimal learning environment that is socially and culturally responsive. These principles emphasize the point that language learning is related and closely connected to identity formation and authentic communication. Moreover, the principles of multimodality theory have emphasized the positive effect of the application of different instructional resources and materials in promoting engagement and development among EFL learners. On the other hand, the principles of multiple intelligence theory call for differentiated instruction and assessment to address various cognitive and emotional capacities of learners.

It is worth noting that this study revealed that the curriculum reformation process should not be based on isolated theoretical frameworks. There is a need to rely on an integrated approach (in which the principles of various theories are taken into account). By integrating sociocultural, social identity, multiple intelligence, and multimodality theories, this study has provided a holistic framework for reforming the most significant ELT curriculum challenges. The results have revealed that a multidimensional approach offers a more comprehensive solution than single-theory models. The findings reinforce the

importance of theory-driven curriculum reforms that account for learners' social contexts, identities, cognitive diversities, and multimodal learning experiences.

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No conflicting interest.

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