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Cultural Identity among Iranian English Language Teachers

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Abstract

This survey investigated the cultural identity of Iranian English language teachers. Accordingly, a cultural identity model was proposed a priori, based on which a questionnaire was developed and piloted on 50 Iranian English language teachers ($\alpha = 0.87$). The developed questionnaire was then administered to 636 male and female Iranian English language teachers. The results of confirmatory factor analysis showed that the model was fit and eight components namely 1) religious beliefs, 2) history, 3) customs, 4) manners and behaviors, 5) Persian language, 6) literature and art, 7) parents' influence and 8) family relations were confirmed to form the core of Iranian cultural identity. The findings also revealed that the older and more experienced teachers had the highest level of Iranian cultural identity. Besides, the results showed that female teachers had stronger Iranian cultural identity than their male counterparts, and teachers from different fields of study and with different university degrees and mother tongues did not significantly differ in their cultural identity.

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1. Introduction

Sapir and Whorf have been cited as the early anthropologists who have strongly stressed the importance of the relationship between language and culture. This symbiotic and closely-knitted bond has been stressed and researchers have focused particularly on the relationship between language, culture, and identity (e.g., Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). Globalization, superdiversity, diasporic life, intercultural communication, and global cultural flows have further escalated the importance of studying language and identity in today's world (Rezaei, 2017). With the globalization flow in the world, communities are more agitated about their once strongly-held possession, i.e., cultural identity.

The classic theory of identity is based on the essentialist paradigm which considers identity as a fixed entity. This belief can be seen when people from a specific region, tribe, community, social group, or geography are associated with certain attributes—mostly known as the stereotypical view of identity. However, globalization with its wide-spread effect has refashioned identity to the point that many communities are no longer identified with their ancestral and heritage culture and beliefs (see Croucher, 2018). This has therefore instigated several sociolinguists to focus more seriously on cultural identity.

Given the role of language and culture on identity formation and the place of English as an international language, so many educationalists and language activists have also become concerned about individual, cultural, and national identity. This new trend in language-related research can be further approved by the publications in the past few years. These studies have focused on different aspects of identity including language and identity formation (Preece, 2016), culture and identity (Riley, 2007), teaching culture and its effects on language learners (Rezaei & Naghibian, 2018), national identity and foreign language learning (Pavlenko, 2003), multiculturalism in education (Babaii, 2018), and discursive formation of ethnic identity (Kyriakou, 2018) *inter alia*.

Considering the Iranian EFL context, few studies (e.g., Saboori, Pishghadam, Hosseini Fatemi, & Ghonsooli, 2015) have tried to systematically investigate cultural identity among Iranian English language teachers. Pishghadam (2011) emphasizes the active role of English language teachers in shaping learners' national and cultural identity. He asserts that ELT programs should train teachers to deal with cultural issues; otherwise, the society will obviously face cultural loss. In another study, Pishghadam and Sadeghi (2011) investigated the culture and identity change among 324 Iranian EFL teachers teaching at private schools in Mashhad. They administered home culture dependency scale to their participants and their results showed that there was a significant difference between the teachers' age and home culture attachment. In other words, teachers over 26 years old showed more home cultural attachment than the younger ones. Moreover, there was a significant difference between the teachers' length of being bilingual and home cultural attachment. Besides, the older group was strongly attached to their home culture but this attachment was lower among the younger group. One more interesting result from their research was that the more languages their participants knew, the more detached they were from their home culture. Additionally, there was a significant difference between the teachers' length of teaching experience and home culture attachment and finally there was no difference between the teachers' gender and their home culture attachment.

Pishghadam and Zabihi (2012) have also explored the challenges of teaching English as a foreign language and its culture within the Iranian Islamic context. In their research, suggestions were provided for how to teach Iranian culture. Moreover, they provided some measures to prevent Iranian culture from being affected by the Western culture. Following a similar general objective, Saboori et al. (2015) investigated the relationship between the components of Iranian identity and their cultural attachment through the cultural dimensions scale (CDS) and the cultural attachment scale (CAS). Their study included 362 bachelor students studying different majors at different universities in Mashhad. The results of their study indicated that there was a significant relationship between the

cultural dimensions and identity components. Actually, the relationship between the components of Iranian cultural identity (national identity, religious identity and Western identity) and Hofstede's cultural dimensions (power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, short-term/long-term orientation, and indulgence/restraint) were investigated. National identity was predicted through indulgence, religious identity through power distance, collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, short-term orientation and Western identity was predicted through power distance and individualism.

Similarly, the lacuna in the literature urged the current researchers to explore Iranian English language teachers' cultural identity as they seem to be more vulnerable to globalization flows of English language. In other words, the researchers try to explore how far English language teachers are affected by their profession and how this has affected their heritage cultural identity. The main objectives of this study are therefore to 1) extract the components of Iranian cultural identity; 2) investigate Iranian English language teachers' cultural identity; and 3) investigate the differences among Iranian English language teachers' cultural identity with different demographic characteristics. Therefore, the present study included two inter-related phases including 1) modeling Iranian cultural identity and developing a questionnaire for it and 2) administering the questionnaire to Iranian English language teachers. Therefore, the research questions in this study are:

1. What are the main components of Iranian cultural identity? In other words, what constitutes cultural identity in Iran?
2. What is the level of Iranian English language teachers' cultural identity?
3. Are there any statistically significant differences between Iranian EFL teachers' cultural identity in terms of their age, L1, gender, teaching experience, fields of study, and university degree?

2. Theoretical Framework

The prolific literature on identity has muddied this concept to the point that several definitions are proffered for this concept in

psychology, sociology, political sciences, and philosophy. Given that the present research was conducted in Iran—with its unique sociohistorical, political, and linguistic backdrop—the present researchers have drawn on the localized definition of cultural identity and what constitutes Iranian cultural identity. For this purpose, the work of several theoreticians and scholars in the fields of sociology, religion, anthropology, philosophy, and political sciences have been consulted. The literature from these fields shows that several attempts have been made for theorizing a comprehensive definition for cultural identity in Iran. According to Ziauddin and Borin (1999), identity comprises customs, practices and meanings, heritage and shared traits and experiences. In Yarshater's (1994) works, on the other hand, the history of Iran and the impact of each historical period on Iranian culture and national identity are accentuated. To him, Iranian cultural identity encompasses elements such as religion, history, Persian language and race. He asserted that historically the Persian language has played the most important role in preserving and transferring the Iranian national and cultural identity. Eslami-Nodoushan (1998) and Soroush (1998) have also outlined Iranian cultural identity based on three axes of a triangle. They believe that contemporary Iranian cultural identity embodies three separate but interrelated elements namely the ancient Iranian identity, the Islamic Shia identity and the 20th-century modern identity. These three historical views of Iranian identity reside on the three sides of a triangle which form the dominant contemporary Iranian culture. Furthermore, Elahi-Ghomshei (as cited in Ashraf, 2016) argues that the most important elements in Iranian culture are religion, music, traditional arts and Persian literature. He considers *Nowrooz* and *Sizdah Bedar* as other sociocultural events in which Iranian identity is demonstrated.

Similarly, Maghsoudi (2001) has referred to the Persian language as the most important constituent in Iranian cultural identity. Maghsoudi further refers to cultural and political heritage as the basis of Iranian cultural identity. Furthermore, Daniel and Mahdi (2006) provide a detailed description of Iranian culture and customs. For them, religion, literature, arts (cinema, drama, music

and dance), architecture, handicrafts (such as Persian carpet, Persian cuisine), family relations, national and traditional holidays and festivals shape the core of Iranian identity. They summarized some of the religious features of Iranian identity that are common among Muslims around the world. These features are the Quran and its teachings for daily life rituals including the five daily prayers and cultural practices such as the mourning during *Muharram*. As another prominent feature of Iranian culture, they refer to *ta'arof*—a form of polite etiquette Iranians employ in their manners.

Ashena and Rohani (2011) also analyzed and discussed Iranian cultural identity, considering it as being composed of the following elements: religion, language (written and oral), cultural geography, history, historical memory, family, and social system. Not unlike the previous scholars, Davari-Ardakani, Mahmoudi and Navab (2013) listed the components of Iranian national and cultural identity as: culture, customs, manners and behaviors, Iranian passport and identity, Iranian myths and ancient monuments, flag, national and ancient sports, religion, ethnicity, arts and handicrafts, economics, literature, science and industry, history and civilization, Iranian eminent characters, and politics.

In summary and in reference to the literature cited above, a tentative model of cultural identity encompassing eight elements was therefore proposed: *religious beliefs, history, customs, manners and behaviors, Persian language, literature and art, parents' influence, and family relations*. This model will be further explained below.

3. Methodology

This study was conducted based on two inter-related phases namely 1) questionnaire and model development and validation; and 2) survey administration. In the first phase of this research, the researchers perused the theoretical review of literature and consulted with a cadre of domain experts from the fields of sociolinguistics, Persian literature, and cultural studies. The results based on the literature review cited above (e.g., Eslami-Nodoushan, 1998; Rajai, 2003; Soroush, 1998; Yarshater, 1994) and Delphi technique of

consulting with a cohort of domain experts showed that Iranian cultural identity in Iran encompasses *religious beliefs, history, customs, manners and behaviors, Persian language, literature and art, parents' influence, and family relations*. As part of the second phase of this research, the questionnaire was administered to both report the factor analysis results and to probe the cultural identity of Iranian English language teachers. Below, the details of these two phases are presented.

3.1. Participants

The participants of this research included:

- a) *A cadre of domain experts*: This cohort of experts included three scholars, researchers and professors in the fields of Sociolinguistics, Sociology, Cultural Studies, Iranian Studies and Persian Literature who assisted the researchers to propose and validate a model for Iranian cultural identity.
- b) *Piloting participants*: In order to check the reliability and content validity of the questionnaire, 50 Iranian English language teachers (similar to the target population) with their age ranging between 20 to 50 years completed the survey.
- c) *Final survey participants*: 636 male and female Iranian EFL teachers participated in the final survey. Regarding their age group, 3.4% ($N = 22$) were under 20, 40.1% ($N = 266$) were 20-25 years old, 24.8% ($N = 165$) were 25-30 years old, 13.9% ($N = 92$) were 30-35 years old, 6.5% ($N = 43$) were 35-40 years old, and finally 7.2% ($N = 48$) were above 40. As for the academic degree of the teacher participants, 40.2% ($N = 256$) were undergraduate, 49.2% ($N = 327$) master and 8% ($N = 53$) PhD holders or students. Regarding their mother tongue, 55.1% ($N = 351$) selected Persian (aka Farsi) as their mother tongue, 16.4% ($N = 109$) selected Azeri, 12.8% ($N = 85$) selected Kurdish, 4.5% ($N = 30$) selected Arabic and 9.2% ($N = 61$) selected other languages as their mother tongue. This group of participants were from different fields of study including 41.6% ($N = 265$) from ELT, 27.7% ($N = 184$) from English

Literature, 13.4% ($N = 89$) from Linguistics, and 14.8% others ($N = 98$) from English Translation. As for their teaching experience, 49.7% ($N = 330$) had 0-5 years, 21.5% ($N = 143$) had 5-10 years,

11.7% ($N = 78$) had 10-15 years, 8.4% ($N = 56$) had 15-20 years and finally 4.4% ($N = 29$) had over 20 years of English language teaching experience. Table 1 summarizes all this information.

Table 1
Final Survey Participants' Demographic Information

Gender	Male	51.1% (325)
	Female	48.8% (311)
Age	under 20	3.4% (22)
	20-25 years old	40.1% (266)
	25-30 years old	24.8% (165)
	30-35 years old	13.9% (92)
	35-40 years old	6.5% (43)
	over 40 years old	7.2% (48)
University Degree	BA	40.2% (256)
	MA	49.2% (327)
	Ph.D.	8.0% (53)
Mother Tongue	Farsi	55.1% (351)
	Azeri	16.4% (109)
	Kurdish	12.8% (85)
	Arabic	4.5% (30)
	Other languages	9.2% (61)
Field of Study	ELT	41.6% (265)
	English Literature	27.7% (184)
	Linguistics	13.4% (89)
	English Translation	14.8% (98)
Teaching Experience	0-5 years	49.7% (330)
	5-10 years	21.5% (143)
	10-15 years	11.7% (78)
	15-20 years	8.4% (56)
	over 20 years	4.4% (29)

3.2. Phase One: Model and Questionnaire Validation

This phase of the study was based on a series of rigorous and systematic steps to develop a valid and reliable model and questionnaire for cultural identity in Iran. The steps that the current researchers took were based on previous works (Khatib & Rezaei, 2013; Rezaei, Khatib, & Baleghizadeh, 2014) and the research manual by Dornyei (2010). In short, the main steps we took included 1) proposing a model based on a critical review of literature, 2) developing a questionnaire, 3) piloting on 50 participants, 4) estimating the

reliability of the questionnaire, and 5) validating the model and questionnaire through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. All these steps are briefly reported below.

3.2.1. Iranian Cultural Identity: A Priori Model

Based on the literature reviewed above and consultation with three experts, the following tentative model was proposed. Table 2 summarizes the main components of cultural identity in Iran along with their related definitions. These components were used to generate items for the questionnaire.

Table 2
Components of Cultural Identity in Iran

Components	Definitions
1 Religious Beliefs	It is associated with the participants' Islamic religious beliefs, rituals and practices.
2 History	It is associated with the nation's awareness, interest and attachment to the history, historical monuments and the great figures of their homeland.
3 Customs	A body of historically established social and personal practices such as celebrating ancient Iranian ceremonies such as <i>Nowrooz</i> and <i>Chaharshanbe-suri</i> .
4 Manners and Behaviors	The way Iranians consciously or unconsciously react and show up in a specific context in the society and family.
5 Persian language	It is concerned with individuals' attitudes toward Persian and the communications they have with others through this language.
6 Literature and Art	It is related to the participants' awareness of and interest in their nation's high culture such as literature and art.
7 Parents' influence	It is related to the active role Iranian parents play in shaping their children's identity and the influence they have on their children's life.
8 Family Relations	It is related to the relationships, feelings, and attachments among the Iranian family members.

3.2.2. Questionnaire Development

In order to test the model, a questionnaire was devised by the researchers. This questionnaire had items which tapped the components of Iranian cultural identity as presented in Table 2. On the other hand, this questionnaire was a data-collection-cum-model-validation tool, utilized for both testing the model (phase one) and data collection (phase two). In order to develop a valid and reliable questionnaire, the first step is to review the existing literature. This serves two main purposes: 1) to review the existing instrument and not reinvent the wheel, and 2) to establish a robust theoretical framework for the instrument. For item generation in this study, the researchers iteratively reviewed the literature so that both the model and the questionnaire would possess an acceptable degree of feasibility, generalizability, and comprehensiveness.

As explained above, cultural identity in this study included eight components; hence, the items were generated and fine-tuned to tap these components. It should be noted that the

researchers resorted to self-initiated item generation as there were no other questionnaires available in the literature to serve the objectives of the present study. For so doing, a pool of items was generated but some of these items were later discarded at the piloting phase. Once the pool of items was prepared, they were further checked for their representativeness, accuracy, and intelligibility. The final version of the questionnaire was translated into Persian so that the respondents could more easily respond to them. In order to make sure about the intelligibility of the items, the questionnaire was back-translated and checked by both experts and non-experts through a think-aloud protocol.

3.2.3. Reliability

In order to establish the reliability of the questionnaire, the researchers piloted the survey on 50 Iranian English language teachers; the results of Cronbach Alpha in Table 3 indicate the Cronbach alpha for each component with the overall reliability index of the questionnaire ($\alpha = 0.87$).

Table 3
Questionnaire Components and Their Reliability Statistics

	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Religious beliefs	4	0.83
History	6	0.85
Customs	6	0.73
Manners and Behaviors	3	0.76
Persian Language	3	0.71
Literature and Art	3	0.72
Parents' Influence	3	0.74
Family Relations	3	0.82
All	31	0.87

3.2.4. Exploratory Factor Analysis

The results for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were taken from the survey administration on 636 participants. Before running EFA, the researchers checked the

factorability of the data. The results, as shown in Table 4, show that KMO value is acceptable (KMO = 0.79) and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating a good correlation between the factors and accordingly the data was factorable.

Table 4
KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.79	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4734.89
	df	595
	Sig.	.000

Therefore, factor analysis was run on Principal Components Analysis, the results of which are

presented in Table 5. This table shows the factors and their loadings.

Table 5
Rotated Component Matrix

	Components							
	Religious Beliefs	History	Customs	Manners and Behavior	Persian Language	Literature and Art	Parents' Influence	Family Relations
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Q30	.863							
Q20	.856							
Q19	.813							
Q3	.711							
Q9		.683						
Q10		.681						
Q26		.567						
Q25		.531						
Q24		.515						
Q11		.502						
Q16			.607					
Q5			.589					
Q17			.565					
Q27			.524					

Q2	.520								
Q1	.513								
Q13		.656							
Q15		.590							
Q14		.572							
Q7			.650						
Q31			.603						
Q8			.557						
Q12				.760					
Q23				.759					
Q22				.736					
Q4					.730				
Q21					.630				
Q6					.593				
Q18						.729			
Q28						.667			
Q29						.657			

3.2.5. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

After running EFL, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was run to check if the questionnaire data fit the model hypothesized a priori. The data for CFA was taken from the 636 participants who had participated in the final survey. In order to test the model and run CFA, AMOS 22 was employed. The results of

the measurement model and its standardized coefficient are given in Figure 1 and Table 6. As Table 6 shows, the output from AMOS 22 was 2/567 (χ^2/df) which is less than 3 and is therefore considered as an acceptable degree. GFI index and RMSEA value were also acceptable. These indices confirm the fitness of the model. In other words, the questionnaire data fit the model.

Table 6

Fit Indices for the Final Model

Current Level	Recommended level	Fit Index
2.56	≤ 3	χ^2/df
.98	$\geq 0/9$	GFI
.05	$< 0/08$	RMSEA

On the other hand, Figure 1 shows the schematic representation of the cultural identity model with its path coefficients. In summary and in response to the first research question, eight components were identified and validated for cultural identify in Iran.

3.3. Phase Two: Survey Results and Discussion

In this phase, the results from the survey are presented to find the answers to the second and third research questions. The second research question of this study was: what is the level of Iranian English language teachers'

cultural identity? Table 7 shows the Mean and Standard Deviation of each component—ranging from 1 to 5 showing strongly disagree to strongly agree in the Likert scale. As this table shows, the mean for all the eight components, except for family relations, was below the hypothetical mean. The teacher respondents in this survey research were still largely inclined toward their family relations as a core element in Iranian cultural identity. This shows that Iranian English language teachers are still attached to their familial ties and relations. However, the responses to other components in Iranian cultural identity were by and large below the mean value.

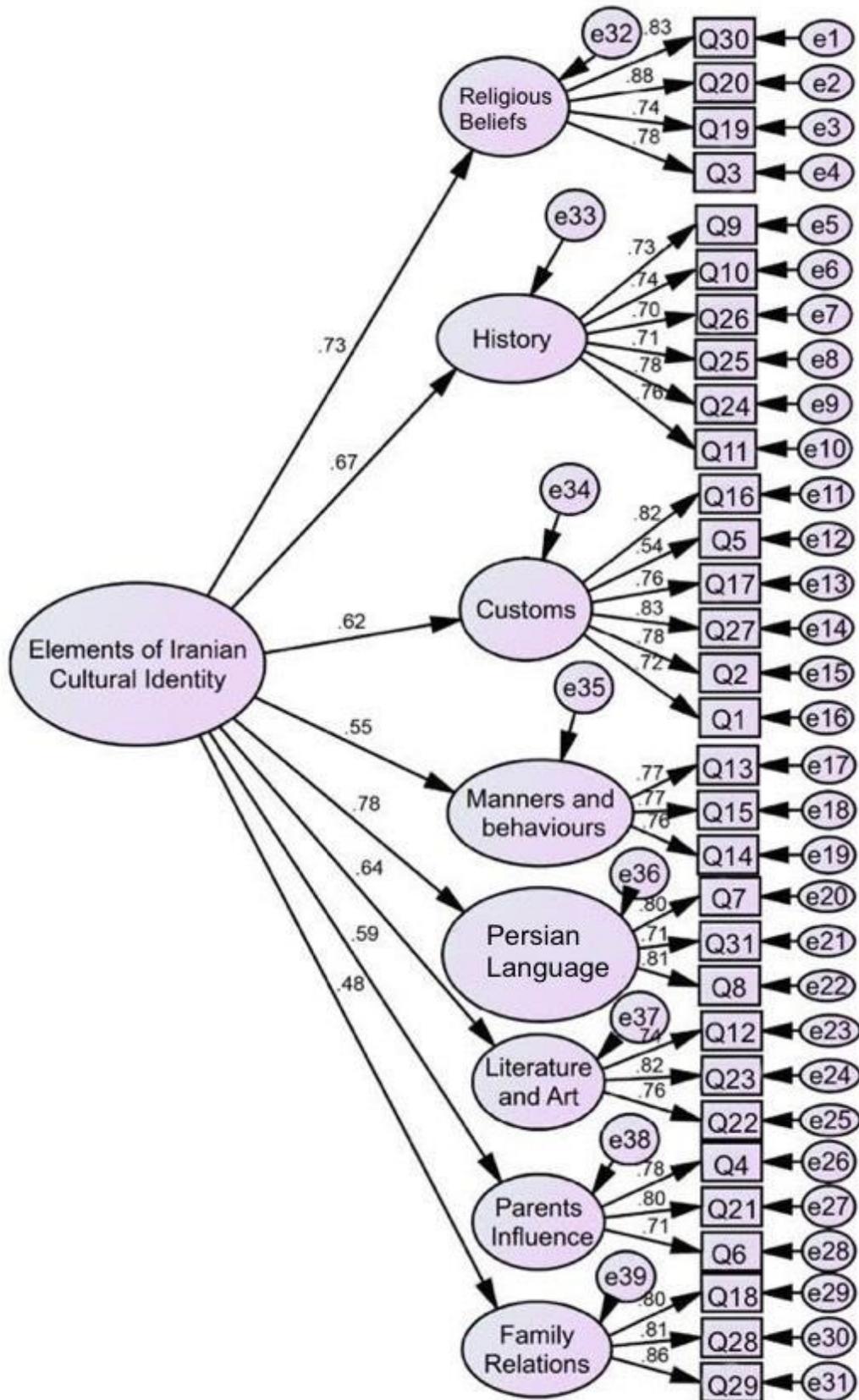


Figure 1
Model of Cultural Identity in Iran

Table 7
Comparison of Iranian Cultural Identity Scales

	Mean	SD
Religious Beliefs	2.20	1.01
History	1.92	.50
Customs	1.87	.58
Manners and Behaviors	1.60	.53
Persian language	2.45	.79
Literature and Art	2.28	.66
Parents' Influence	1.97	.68
Family Relations	3.00	.69

The overall scores on the questionnaire from each respondent ranged from 31 to 155. In order to reach the answer to the second research question, the overall mean score (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) obtained from the teachers' responses to the questionnaire were tabulated ($M = 65$; $SD = 9.7$). As shown in Table 8, religious belief was tapped by items 3, 19, 20 and 30 and the results showed that the mean for these items were not high—i.e., 2.39, 2.28, 1.99 and 2.15, respectively. Items 9, 10, 11, 24, 25 and 26 were related to Iranian history and the means for these items were 2.19, 2.15, 2.28, 1.89, 1.43, and 1.59, respectively. These means indicate that the participants were familiar with and interested in the history of their own country but these means were not very high. The means for the items related to Iranian customs (1, 2, 5, 16, 17, 27) were similarly not high (1.44, 1.57, 2.24, 1.63, 1.76 and 2.63) and this again shows that Iranian English language teachers are less inclined toward their own customs. Or the means related to manners and behaviors (items 13, 14, and 15) were 2.34, 2.62, and 1.98 which were not very low but not yet high. The Persian language as one of the pillars of

Iranian cultural identity was evaluated by items 7, 8 and 31, which had means of 1.59, 3.54 and 2.37, respectively; or literature and art in items 12, 22, and 23 with 2.26, 2.47, and 2.11 as their means, respectively. Moreover, parents' influence and family relations as two other components of Iranian identity were assessed by items 4, 6 and 21 for the former, and 18, 28 and 29 for the latter. These items had 2.00, 2.11, 1.81, 1.44, 1.57 and 1.80 as their means, respectively. All these components had means lower than or close to the hypothetical mean.

These descriptive statistics give us a general overview of how participants viewed each component in the Iranian cultural identity. In order to make sure if the overall score was tilted toward either side (Iranian cultural identity or otherwise), a one-sample t-test was run and the results showed that $t(636) = 171$, $p = 0.00$, and $d = 0.2$, meaning that the Iranian English language teacher participants in this survey were less inclined to their Iranian cultural identity. However, the effect size ($d = 0.2$) was low, showing that they were not drastically away from their Iranian cultural identity.

Table 8
Mean and Standard Deviation for Each Item

Item	Mean	SD
1 It is important for me to arrange the <i>Haft-Sin</i> and gather with my family on the Iranian New Year's Eve (<i>Nowrooz</i>).	1.44	0.75
2 I spend time in the park or nature with my family on Nature's Day (<i>Sizdah-Bedar</i>).	1.57	0.74
3 I actively participate in religious events and rituals such as the mourning of Muharram, Eid-e-Ghorban, Eid-e Fitr.	2.39	1.24
4 My parent's religious acts and beliefs have played a significant role in shaping my religious identity since childhood.	2.00	1.07
5 It is important for me to hold my wedding ceremony according to Iranian customs.	2.24	1.14
6 My parents' opinion plays an active role in my lifetime decisions.	2.11	1.00
7 My inner thoughts are in Persian.	1.59	0.80
8 Persian is not a complete language for expressing feelings, emotions and thoughts.	3.45	1.21
9 I am interested in reading Iranian narrations and mythical stories.	2.19	1.02

10	I am to some extent aware of the ancient and contemporary history of Iran.	2.15	0.85
11	I am fully aware of the historical events and the great influential figures in the history of my country.	2.28	0.90
12	I know about the Iranian literary and artistic figures and I am familiar with their works.	2.26	0.88
13	In my opinion, taking the lead in greeting the elders indicates a person's politeness and is a sign of respect.	2.34	1.08
14	I try not to turn my back to others while sitting.	2.62	1.28
15	I wait for the elders in the family to come to the table and to have our meal together.	1.98	0.97
16	I believe that <i>Tarof</i> , while having a meal or passing in, indicates a person's politeness and respect for others.	1.63	0.82
17	It is important to me to celebrate the longest and darkest night of the year (<i>Yalda or Shabe Chelleh</i>) with my family members.	1.76	0.88
18	I feel happier and joyful while hanging out and partying with friends than family.	1.44	0.66
19	I believe in taking a vow (nazr) in different situations such as healing a sick, being accepted in university entrance exams and many other situations.	2.28	1.22
20	Listening to the recitation of Quran and religious prayers gives me peace of mind.	1.99	1.14
21	I enjoy listening to classic Persian music under the influence of my parents.	1.81	0.97
22	I am interested in participating in literature classes such as poetry, playwriting, and more.	2.47	1.18
23	I use my country's handicraft and artistic craftsmanship like pottery, carpets, rugs and ... to decorate my house.	2.11	1.03
24	I am proud of the history of my country.	1.89	1.01
25	I consider the ancient historical sites to be assets for my country and I agree that they should be well protected.	1.43	0.71
26	I am interested in visiting the historical sites of my country.	1.59	0.80
27	Each year I take part in the safe Fire Festival (<i>Chaharshanbe-Suri</i>).	2.63	1.28
28	I would like and prefer to live independently before marriage.	1.57	0.77
29	My family members are aware of the details of each other's lives and support each other in all stages of life.	1.80	0.85
30	I believe in doing religious practices such as praying, fasting, etc.	2.15	1.24
31	I try my best to use only Persian words in my daily conversations while speaking in Persian.	2.37	1.19

Therefore, the results of the second research question indicated that Iranian English language teachers' cultural identity is below the average level and they are less inclined toward their own Iranian cultural identity. From a poststructuralist point of view, however, identity has a more fluid, dynamic and changeable nature and requires more qualitative research methods and tools to be studied (Rezaei, 2017). In other words, future studies call for more ethnographic case studies in the form of longitudinal research to better show the Iranian English language teachers' identity. The results of the second research question are in contrast with Niazi, Shafae Moghadam and Khedmatkar (2013). They have done a quantitative study and investigated the relationship between learning a foreign language and different dimensions of identity including cultural identity. Regarding cultural identity, the majority of their participants (56.7%) had a high level of Iranian cultural identity. Moreover, 11.1% low and 32.2 % had a moderate level of cultural

identity. However, the results of the second research question of this study illustrated that more or less the majority of the Iranian EFL teachers' cultural identity are below the moderate level. Meanwhile, Niazi, et al. (2013) concluded that there is no significant relationship between English proficiency and cultural identity but there is a negative relationship between English proficiency and national identity which requires more rigorous attention.

The third research question of this study was: Are there any statistically significant differences between Iranian EFL teachers' cultural identity in terms of their age, L1, gender, teaching experience, field of study, and university degree? In order to understand the statistically significant difference between the Iranian EFL teachers' cultural identity with different demographic characteristics, t-tests and ANOVAs were run. The results of the t-tests and ANOVAs are presented in Table 9. According to this table, $F(5,636) = 2.44, p =$

0.03 which indicates that there was a statistically significant difference between the participants' cultural identity from different age groups. Participants over 40 years had the highest degree of Iranian cultural identity ($M = 2.19, p = 0.03$) and participants under 20 years had the least degree of Iranian cultural identity ($M = 2, p = 0.03$). However, there was no statistically significant difference between other age groups. This can be seen in the Tukey post-hoc test. According to Gao (2010), psychologically young people are more vulnerable to make continuous attempts in order to stabilize a new behavior. Therefore, young Iranian EFL teachers try to adopt the Western culture that consequently affects their cultural identity. On the contrary, the older Iranian EFL teachers seem to have reformed their identity in the course of several years of teaching English. Meeus (2011) mentions that identity is stabilized during middle ages and later than early adolescence.

Furthermore, according to Table 9, $F(5, 636) = 2.64$ and $p = 0.02$. Thus, there was a statistically significant difference between teachers' cultural identity and their years of teaching experience. The teachers with 0-5 years of teaching experience ($M = 1.97$) had the least level of Iranian cultural identity. Teachers with over 20 years of teaching experience ($M = 2.18$) had the highest level of Iranian cultural identity and had a statistically significant difference in their cultural identity with teachers with other teaching experiences. As identity is stabilized and reformed in middle ages and late adolescence, it can be concluded that young teachers with less teaching experience are more vulnerable to adopt western culture in order to be part of their imagined community (Norton, 2000). Later, as an adult, after experiencing English language and culture for years, their Iranian cultural identity reaches a higher degree.

Subsequently, they become more attached to their own culture. Similarly, Pishghadam and Sabouri (2011) in their survey on 324 Iranian EFL teachers found that teachers above 26 years of age had higher attachment to their home (Iranian) culture in comparison to the younger ones.

An independent sample t-test was also run in order to compare the Iranian cultural identity among male and female teachers. According to Table 9, $t(663) = 4.89, p = 0.00, d = 0.5$ which shows that female teachers' level of cultural identity ($M = 2.22$) was slightly higher than that of their male colleagues ($M = 2.09$). However, this finding contradicts the findings obtained from Pishghadam and Sabouri (2011) who found that there was no difference between the teachers' gender and their home culture attachment. This contradictory result can be justified by considering the fact that the effect size ($d = 0.5$) showing the significant difference was moderate and not very high. Rezaei et al. (2014) also explored the Iranian English language learners' language identity—which included cultural factors too—and their results showed that there was no significant difference between male and female learners in terms of language identity.

In addition, according to Table 9, $F(5,636) = 0.98$, and $p = 0.41$. Therefore, there is no statistically significant difference among the cultural identity of teachers with different mother tongues. According to Table 9, $F(5,636) = 0.64$, and $p = 0.52$; therefore, there is no statistically significant difference among the cultural identity of teachers with different university degrees. Finally and likewise, according to Table 9, $F(5,636) = 0.29$, and $p = 0.83$, meaning that there is no statistically significant difference among the cultural identity of teachers from different fields of study.

Table 9
ANOVA and t-test Results for Cultural Identity and Demographic Information

Demographic Variable	Abbreviation	Mean	F	Sig.	Tukey H SD	
Age	under 20	a	2.00	2.44	0.03	*a-f
	20-25 years old	b	2.16			
	25-30 years old	c	2.15			
	30-35 years old	d	2.17			
	35-40 years old	e	2.14			
	over 40 years old	f	2.19			

Mother Tongue	Fars		2.16	0.98	0.41	
	Azeri		2.20			
	Kurd		2.15			
	Arab		2.11			
	Other		2.10			
Teaching Experience	none	g	2.03	2.64	0.02	
	0-5 years	h	1.97			l-h
	5-10 years	l	2.18			n-h
	10-15 years	m	2.16			m-h
	15-20 years	n	2.17			o-h
over 20 years	o	2.18				
Degree	BA		2.16	0.64		0.52
	MA		2.15			
	PhD		2.21			
Gender	male	y	2.09	t = 4.89	0.00	
	female	z	2.22			
Field of study	ELT		2.16			
	English Literature		2.17	0.29		0.83
	Linguistics		2.18			
	English Translation		2.14			

5. Concluding Remarks

This study was conducted in order to probe the cultural identity of Iranian EFL teachers who taught at universities and language institutes. It was a two-phased research. For the first phase, review of the related literature was initially done and a model of Iranian cultural identity was hypothesized a priori. In order to operationalize this model, a questionnaire was devised based on the hypothesized model. The questionnaire was first pilot tested on 50 male and female Iranian EFL teachers. Second, it was administered to 636 Iranian EFL teachers.

In brief, for the first research question the data was obtained by means of the questionnaire developed by the researchers which confirmed the fitness of the Iranian cultural identity model through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). In this phase, the results showed that the components of Iranian cultural identity were: 1) religious beliefs, 2) history, 3) customs, 4) manners and behaviors, 5) literature and art, 6) Persian language, 7) parents' influence, and 8) family relations.

The second research question asked about the level of Iranian EFL teachers' cultural identity. The results showed that the Iranian EFL teachers' cultural identity was below the hypothetical mean and they were not highly

attached to their Iranian culture. The same was true for each component of Iranian cultural identity except for family relations. Although the Iranian EFL teachers' level of adherence to their family relations was at the hypothetical mean, they were attached to and influenced by their family. Moreover, in order to answer the third research question and to investigate whether there are statistically significant differences among Iranian EFL teachers' cultural identity with different demographic characteristics, t-test and ANOVA were run. The results are summarized hereunder:

- There was a statistically significant difference among the cultural identity of Iranian EFL teachers from different age groups. Teachers above 40 years of age had the highest and teachers below 20 had the lowest level of Iranian cultural identity.
- There was a statistically significant difference between the Iranian EFL teachers' cultural identity with different years of teaching experience. Teachers with 0-5 years of teaching experience had the least level of Iranian cultural identity and teachers with over 20 years of teaching experience had the highest level of Iranian cultural identity.
- There was a statistically significant difference between the male and female

EFL teachers' cultural identity. The results indicated that female teachers had a slightly higher level of Iranian cultural identity compared to the male teachers.

- Finally, there was no statistically significant difference among the cultural identity of Iranian EFL teachers with different mother tongues, fields of study and university degrees.

As for the limitations and delimitations of this research, there were some data collection and methodological issues. Culture is a broad construct and the researchers could not include all perspectives of culture within the questionnaire. Some may argue that the Iranian culture is not limited to the Persian language, but other minority or minoritized languages should be also included. The researchers, however, had to make a compromise based on the nation-state political system and report Persian as the official language. This issue was taken into account by recruiting participants from other language groups in Iran to further investigate the role of L1 in these teachers' level of cultural identity. Future studies can take these factors into consideration.

Some of the items in the questionnaire were sensitive and the participants might have responded in a conservative manner. In order to prevent this potential issue, it was explicitly mentioned in the introductory section of the questionnaire that their responses would remain confidential. Furthermore, since this study used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to validate the model and the questionnaire, a large sample size was required. However, it was difficult for the researchers to gather the required data by distributing the questionnaire in various ELT forums. Another limitation of this study was limiting the participants of this study to EFL teachers. Future researchers can focus on other language teaching agents such as textbook writers, policy makers or institute owners.

As for the implications of this research, we can refer to the government and language policy makers. According to Ricento (2009), there is a relationship between language policy and national identity. He mentions that ideologies may be asserted to the members of a society

through a language. He adds that "a state and its operations should be seen as part of what goes on in the sociopolitical and cultural field in a country" (p. 249). Moreover, he stresses that "language policies should be best seen as a niched activity, and the same goes for its desired product, national identity" (p. 249). As concluded from the results, the Iranian cultural identity of the EFL teachers in Iran is below the moderate level and this is a critical situation for the national and cultural identity of a nation. This study may encourage the government and the people themselves to take steps to maintain their cultural heritage and identity. The government might do this by training more culturally competent teachers who are equipped with more transnational, if not totally national, beliefs.

The next important implication of this study was that while filling out the questionnaire, the teachers were made to think about some cultural matters which are important but not aptly given due attention. The awareness that might have been raised on the part of the participants is one of the prominent implications of cultural studies. It might make the participants pay more attention to such simple but important matters. Hence, it is expected that the EFL teachers become more cognizant of such cultural important issues in their profession while filling out the questionnaire. TTC courses should take this into account more seriously. Teachers should be trained to be proud of their own culture and pay attention to learn a foreign language and culture and respect it, but not at the price of losing their own culture.

For future studies, another qualitative data collection tool can be employed to replicate this study at a smaller scale, but thicker in its data. According to Rezaei (2017), narrative inquiry and analysis, ethnography, diaries and journals, interview and questionnaire are research methods and tools that might be used for researching identity in language and education. In addition, it is suggested to conduct a longitudinal ethnographic study regarding Iranian EFL teachers' cultural identity by investigating the teachers' cultural identity formation and reformation at different stages.

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