On the Development of a Model of Cultural Identity and Language Achievement among Iranian Advanced EFL Learners

Sharareh Ebrahimi, PhD Candidate, Department of English Language, Qeshm Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qeshm, Iran
Eb_sharareh@yahoo.com
Shahram Afraz*, Assistant Professor, Department of English Language, Qeshm Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qeshm, Iran
a.sh32@rocketmail.com
Samimi, Fazlolah, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Bandar-Abbas Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bandar-Abbas, Iran
fazl.samimi67@gmail.com

Abstract
Culture is an inseparable part of a language. In other words, mastering a language and being able to communicate through it inevitably entails integrating with the culture of the speakers of that language which is the reflection of people's identity. The aim of the present study was designing a model of Iranian cultural identity. Initially, to select a homogeneous sample of learners at the advanced level, 300 language learners at the advanced level took TOEFL and 180 learners were chosen as the participants of the study. The cultural identity model was designed by the use of interviews and literature review to come up with main components of cultural identity. Afterwards, participants were interviewed about their identity and four components comprising Iranian cultural identity were identified. The results of the factors analysis showed that raw data converged to a pattern with four components which fit the hypothesized model of cultural identity. Then, the cultural identity questionnaire was given to participants. The results of statistical analyses indicated that there was a significant negative relationship between cultural identity and language achievement of the participants.

Keywords: Culture, Cultural Identity, EFL Learners, Language Achievement, Language Learning

Introduction

Recently, due to many developments in the area of L2 instruction, our life has been considerably affected. In fact, these changes caused nations form different countries get exposed to other cultures while learning a foreign language. According to Brown (2007), culture is a group of beliefs, values, and skills setting a group of people apart from other groups. As Hinkel (1999) asserts, culture refers to the ways of thinking, believing, and behaving which form social constructs and evolve within a group and then via the socialization process are transferred to other group members (cited in Jamalvandi, 2013). Culture is defined as a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Brooks, 1997). It reflects person's identity indeed. Many aspects of identity change when a person moves from one culture to another. The purpose of this change is to accommodate with new culture (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000).

Through identity, we can answer the questions of "who am I?", "where am I from?", and "what is my background?" Identity is an individual's self-definition that focuses on enduring characteristics of the self (Jason, 2009). In addition, cultural identity has been considered as common collective identities shared by individuals (Schwartz, Zamboanga, &Weisskirch, 2008).

Attitudes about native culture such as the feelings of comfort, pride, or shame toward the culture of origin form individuals' cultural identity (Cano, 2008). In fact, it is described as people's nature and nurture.

Undoubtedly, discourse is born out of the integration between culture and language, referring to the way in which people speak, think, and behave. Richards and Schmidt (2010) believe that language achievement refers to "a learner's mastery, in a second language and foreign language, of what has been taught or learned after a period of instruction." (p. 312). Englebert (2004) asserts that an L2 instruction entails teaching a foreign culture since in EFL classes, as we teach the language, we automatically teach the culture.

However, the point is that learners are mostly unaware of this fact or they may not care about these ideas. Alptekin (2006) showed that when learners know the cultural norms, they can interpret the foreign texts better. According to Leveridge (2008), L2 teachers should promote learners' cultural awareness of target community and they need to select the culturally appropriate materials to teach. If learners are to communicate with individuals from other cultural backgrounds, they will need not only to understand the cultural influences in others' behaviors, but also to recognize the profound influence of patterns of their own culture. Therefore, teaching target culture has to serve the development of cross-cultural communication.

Literature Review

Accepting the relationship between language and identity, Nunan and Choi (2010) state that all individuals grapple with issues of how language and culture impact their identity. Edwards (2009, p. 2) believes that "identity is at the heart of the person, and the group, and the connective tissue that links them. Many scholars maintain that cultural identity is an important asset for psychological adaptation (Phinney Horenczyk, Liebkind, &Vedder, 2001). As Ahmadi (2010) maintains language and the construct of identity are interwoven. Moreover, a review of the previous literature indicates that cultural identity includes various aspects consisting of religious beliefs (Klonoff & Landrine, 2000), culture attitude (Pishghadm & Kamyabi, 2009), national attitude (Pishghadm & Kamyabi, 2009), and family activities (Bhugra, Bhui, Mallett, Desai, Singh, & Leff, 1999), and self-attitudes (Bhugra, Bhui, Mallett, Desai, Singh, & Leff, 1999).

Razmjoo and Izadpanah (2012) carried out a study and found that identity processing style makes important contribution to L2 literacy-related proficiency. A slight positive relationship was also observed between the informational processing style, L2 literacy, and L2 writing. A study conducted by Razmjoo and Mavaddat (2015) sought to examine how justice judgments, outcomes, and identity orientations are related. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between procedural justice and rule compliance. Moreover, there was 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 mediating impact on the causal relationship between the two.

Spenader (2011) tried to explore the relationship between acculturation and language learning during a year-long study abroad program. The researcher presented the experiences of four U.S. American sojourners to Sweden as case studies. The results indicated that higher levels of acculturation are associated with higher levels of proficiency, while a rejection of the host culture is associated with lower levels of proficiency. Norrizan (1993) also conducted a study to examine the effect of various cultural components in ESL texts in Malaysia. She used a combined cultural unit which is comprised of culturally suggestive topics such as forms of the houses,

studying abroad, salary, financial loans, etc. She 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 more selective approach in selecting appropriate items by taking account of the learners' culture.

As Arikan (2011, p.232) states: Atkinson's (1999) thorough analysis revealed that research on culture received minimal consideration in literature. Therefore, more research is needed to be conducted especially in Iranian context on cultural identity and also on the way general cultural identity is connected with foreign language learning. Thus, 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.

Research Question

According to the purpose of the study, which was developing a model of cultural identity and language achievement in Iranian context based on the close relationship between these two items, the following research question was formulated.

Q: What model can possibly be formulated to explain cultural identity among Iranian advanced EFL learners?

Methodology

Participants

300 Iranian EFL learners consisting of 160 female and 140 male learners from the advanced level of proficiency in Safir institute in Tehran participated in the study. The reason behind selecting the advanced learners was two-fold. Firstly, the researcher had access to this level of proficiency more than the other levels. Secondly, after explaining the purpose of the study and data collection to different levels of proficiency including elementary, intermediate, and advanced learners, the researcher found that the advanced learners available to take part in the study were much more willing to be the participants of the study.   To select a homogeneous sample of learners at the advanced level, they took TOEFL and 180 learners were chosen as the participants of the study.107 were female and 73 were male learners. They were selected based on convenience sampling and included male and female learners. Their age range was within 18 to 35.

Instruments
Semi-structured Interview

As the main purpose of the present study was to develop a model for cultural identity in the Iranian context of ELT, to develop the initial construct of cultural identity from learners' perspectives, it was necessary to collect qualitative data to establish the initial construct. To this aim, semi-structured interviews were held with the participants. The participants were interviewed face-to-face with the researcher. The method of the interview selected for this study was "qualitative interviewing." This method "is based in conversation, with the emphasis on researchers asking questions and listening, and respondents answering" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, cited in Warren, 2002, p. 83). In this method of interview, interviewees are considered as "meaning makers, not passive conduits for retrieving information from an existing vessel of answers" (Holstin & Gubrium, 1995, cited in Warren, 2002, p. 83). The kind of the interview conducted in this study, was that of semi-structured. In this type of interview, the whole process of interviewing changes throughout the continuum of highly-structured to highly unstructured in that the predetermined questions are not necessarily asked in a fixed order but rather in a more

flexible manner. It should be noted that the interview questions (Appendix A) came from an extensive review of the related literature pertinent to cultural identity and awareness. To assure the content validity of the questions, appeal to expert was done. To this end, the initial list of questions was reviewed by two Ph.D. holders in the field of TEFL and due revisions were carried out.

Focus Group Interviews

Apart from the individual interview, a series of focus group interviews were also run by the researcher to investigate how participants conceptualized their cultural identity. Focus group can be defined as "a way of collecting qualitative data, which involves engaging a small number of people in an informal group discussion (or discussions, 'focused' around a particular topic or set of issues" (Wilkinson, 2004, p. 177). It should be noted that, the interview questions for the focus group interviews were exactly the same as the semi-structured interview questions. However, since in face-to-face semi-structured interviews, some of the participants may not feel comfortable to speak, focus group interviews are recommended to collect more in-depth data (Wilkinson, 2004). As Madriz (2000) maintains, focus group interview data collection tool in which the researcher plays the role of a moderator will help researchers have access to participants who may not feel comfortable enough in one-on-one interviews.

TOEFL

A TOEFL test including 50 reading and 40 structure items was administered to select a homogeneous sample of learners at the advanced level. To be on the safe side, it was tried to select participants with similar language proficiency based on TOEFL scores as it was assumed that variation in language proficiency may cause significant changes in outcome. To make sure about the reliability of the TOEFL version used in the current study, it was piloted on 30 language learners and Cronbach's Alpha was run on the obtained data. The reliability coefficient turned out to be .81 which is considered acceptable.

Safir Language Academy Achievement Test for the Advanced Level

To measure English language learner's achievement, the Safir Language Academy Achievement Test for the advanced level was employed. This test contained 60 items with a writing section. The sixty items covered the listening and reading as well as vocabulary and grammar. Ten points were also allocated to the writing section of the test. Therefore, the maximum achievement score of the participants was 70.

Questionnaire on Cultural Identity

The questionnaire measuring the cultural identity of the participants was designed (Appendix B) by the researcher. To this end, drawing on the results of the interviews, the list of questions measuring cultural identity was identified. Next the following steps were taken in line with Dornyei (2003):
1) Preparing the initial items based on the identified sub-constructs
2) Appealing to authority for the initial validation of the content and reviewing the items
3) Running exploratory factor analysis to establish the existence of the identified sub-constructs in the sample population for validation purposes
4) Piloting the confirmed items on a pilot sample with characteristics similar to those of the population of the study

Exploratory factor analysis was used to explore the construct structure of the questionnaire and Cronbach's Alpha to establish the reliability of each factor of the questionnaire. Exploratory factor analysis refers to a statistical technique employed to reduce data to a smaller group of variables to uncover the underlying theoretical structure of a construct.

Procedure

The procedure of the study was composed of two phases. The first phase included the steps in constructing the cultural identity scale fitting Iranian context of ELT. This phase contained literature review on culture, identity, and awareness to identify the main factors comprising a person's identity awareness in a given culture. In order to make the identified factors understandable, all the objective behavior and subjective feelings connected to the identified factors were stated in arrays of statements with the help of literature and also contextual characteristics of Iranian society. These constructs were then converted into some interview questions and addressed to the participants of the study. The results of the interviews were content analyzed to help the researcher come up with an initial pool of items measuring cultural identity.

After preparing the initial pool of items of the questionnaire, three EFL experts (mainly university professors) were asked to comment on the items. All the comments were taken care of and in the next stage, the questionnaire was piloted on a sound sample of participants depending on the number of the items of the questionnaire. After the administration of the questionnaire, all the items were reviewed with a limited number of respondents to make sure about the clarity of the items. After gathering enough information about the clarity and expression of the questionnaire, the necessary adjustment was made to the wording of the items. Next, the raw data collected from the completed questionnaires underwent exploratory factor analysis to validate the construct structure of the questionnaire. Reliability analysis was also performed on the whole scale and also on each factor of the questionnaire to make sure about the internal consistency of the scale and subscales.

In the second phase of the study, the selected participants completed the questionnaire by the help of the administrators of Safir English institute. As stated before, the initial pool of respondents was 300 language learners at the advanced level. In order to make sure about the true level of the participants, TOEFL was given to the students. Based on the descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviations, those participants whose scores lied within the range of +/- one standard deviation were selected as the actual participants of the study. The purpose for such process was selecting homogeneous learners in terms of language proficiency by deselecting those whose TOEFL scores were remote from the central point of distribution (out of the range of +/- one standard deviation).

Design and Data analyses

The present study adopted a mixed methods design in that no intervention to be made in the research environment. More specifically, an exploratory design based on grounded theory was utilized. After administering the cultural identity questionnaire to the actual participants, the data was made ready for statistical analysis.

Results
The theoretical identification of the components of cultural identity

After literature review, several aspects of cultural identity were identified as the first step in modeling cultural identity. The aspects included religious beliefs (Klonoff & Landrine, 2000),

culture attitude (Pishghadm & Kamyabi, 2009), national attitude (Pishghadm & Kamyabi, 2009), family activities (Bhugra, Bhui, Mallett, Desai, Singh, & Leff, 1999), and self-attitudes (Bhugra, Bhui, Mallett, Desai, Singh, & Leff, 1999).

Religion beliefs: religion is one of the main constituent of one's identity. Most people receive some forms of religion training although as adult they may choose a different path (Klonoff & Landrine, 2000).

Culture attitude: central to the concept of cultural identity is attachment to one's own culture. Positive attitudes toward native culture are indication of strong cultural identity (Pishghadm & Kamyabi, 2009).

National attitude: like culture attitude, national attitude forms part of cultural identity. In national attitude, feelings and sense of attachment of people toward members of territory forms an element of cultural identity.

Language component: language is also an apparent indication of ones' cultural identity (Bhugra, Bhui, Mallett, Desai, Singh, & Leff, 1999). The competence of a person to fluently speak his native language clearly indicates to which group (e.g. nation) that person belong.

Objectifying the cultural identity components
        Then, actual data from the participants was elicited for the purpose of testing the cultural identity model. To this end, individual and focused interviews were conducted to ask participants opinions about each of the components. To assist the participants to come up with specific behavior showing their cultural identity, some example behaviors from literature were given to them. What participants expressed as behaviors showing their cultural identity were classified into the four categories identified earlier (e.g. religion beliefs, cultural attitude, national attitude, and language component). For instance, regularity of saying prayer could be counted as an indication of religion beliefs or liking traditions such as Nazri could be classified as cultural attitude. In order to raise the validity and comprehensiveness of cultural identity model, the list of items (specific behaviors) representing identity components were given to two PhD graduates in applied linguistics to comment on the list of items and also to add any more items if there were any missing one. After considering the revisions, the final list of items was prepared. Below, a list of components for cultural identity and a list of items related to each component is presented. It should be noted that the hereunder list of items corresponding to each component are not the exact items of the questionnaire. They are; however, the main initial points based on which the final questionnaire items were developed (The exact questionnaire items can be seen in Table 1).

Religion beliefs
Religion beliefs would deal with attitudes toward:
●Visiting holy places
●Fasting
●Saying prayer
●Attending religious ceremonies
●Religious charities (Zakat and Khoms)
●Going to mosques
●Respecting religious leaders (Imams)

Culture attitude

Culture attitude dealt with the way people feel about various aspects of native culture including:
- Iranian lifestyle
- Iranian foods
- Traditional rituals like Taarof
- Being polite in front of parents and elderlies
- Participating in ceremonies like Iranian wedding, Nowrooz, Yalda night etc.
- Participating in such ceremonies like funerals
- Iranian clothing
- Iranian way of greeting
- Iranian traditions

National attitude

As in culture attitude, national attitude was about people's feelings about national issues such as:
- Iranian nation regardless of their ethnicity
- Iranians equal rights
- national anthem
- Being called an Iranian
- Being proud of nationality
- Iranians as a great nation
- Iran's history and achievements

Language

The last component was about the way people think about issues related to national and official language of their country including:
- Farsi as the official language of Iranians
- To be proud as a Farsi speaker
- Preservation and promotion of Farsi
- Being a Farsi speaker vs. an English speaker
- Farsi in science
- Farsi as an international language

Designing the cultural identity questionnaire

The items related to the components of cultural identity were shaped into the questionnaire with Likert type scale of five points. The purpose of this step was collecting data for testing the model. In other words, through designing the questionnaire, it was possible to elicit data on each aspect of the model and statistically test the factorial structure of the model. Table 1 displays the cultural identity questionnaire.

Table 1. *Cultural Identity Questionnaire*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Religion					
I prefer going to holy Meca instead of					

going on a tour in Europe.	
I believe in fasting as a Muslim.	
I think we should prayer regularly as Muslims.	
Attending religious ceremonies should be part of our lifestyle.	
I feel calm when I go to holy places.	
Helping religious charities is a good activity.	
I think we should regularly visit the mosques for various religious activities.	
I like to be respectful to the Imams and do less joyful activities on their death anniversaries.	

Culture

I like Iranian lifestyle and enjoy it.	
Iranian foods are among the best foods in the world.	
I think it is not bad to offer Taarof because it shows politeness.	
Being polite in front of parents and elderlies is necessary.	
I like participating in such ceremonies like Iranian wedding, Nowrooz, Yalda night etc.	
I prefer wearing normal Iranian clothing (e.g. trousers and shirt, Manto, etc.) rather those being more common in western countries (short pants, topless etc.).	
I prefer Iranian way of greeting (e.g. handshaking, kissing, hugging etc.).	
I like Iranian traditions like Ash Nazri, Sele Rahem (visiting relatives), Khastegari (marriage proposal), anniversaries etc.	

Nationality

I respect all the Iranians regardless of their ethnicity.	
All the Iranians should have equal rights and have equal opportunities.	
I am proud of my national anthem.	
I like to be called an Iranian when I am abroad.	
I am proud of my nationality.	
Iranians are a great nation.	

Iran has great history and achievements.
Language
Farsi is and should be the official language of Iranians.
I like Farsi and I am proud of being a Farsi speaker.
Currently Farsi needs to be further preserved and promoted.
Every Iranian needs to know Farsi regardless of what is their first language.
I like being a Farsi speaker instead of English speaker.
Farsi has the capability of being used in various contexts (e.g. academic, social, technical etc.).
I like to see Farsi as an international language in future.

Administering the questionnaire

The cultural identity questionnaire was designed according to the cultural identity components and was administered to participants. The raw data collected from this questionnaire was in the form of scores between 1 to 5 for each item. A score of 1 was dedicated to the option *strongly disagree* and a score of 5 to the option *strongly agree*. Afterwards, data was fed into SPSS data sheet and were made ready for factor analysis.

Factor analysis

To test the cultural identity model theorized above, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the data collected through the questionnaire. Thus, two methods were employed; eigenvalue table though Principal Component Analysis and eigenvalue plot. Table 2 shows the results of factor loading and the related variances of the data related to cultural identity construct.

Table 2. *The results of factor loading and the related variances of the data related to cultural identity construct*

	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings[a]
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	12.668	42.225	42.225	11.984
2	8.491	28.303	70.528	9.145
3	1.031	3.436	73.964	1.033
4	1.003	3.345	77.309	1.031

5	.949	3.165	80.474
6	.893	2.975	83.449
7	.664	2.215	85.663
8	.438	1.461	87.124
9	.357	1.190	88.314
10	.348	1.159	89.472
11	.329	1.098	90.570
12	.264	.879	91.449
13	.262	.874	92.323
14	.256	.854	93.177
15	.240	.801	93.978
16	.240	.799	94.777
17	.219	.729	95.507
18	.211	.702	96.209
19	.190	.632	96.841
20	.189	.631	97.473
21	.164	.548	98.021
22	.153	.509	98.530
23	.130	.433	98.963
24	.107	.356	99.319

25	.091	.304	99.622
26	.066	.221	99.843
27	.028	.092	99.935
28	.019	.065	100.000
29	9.678	3.226E-15	100.000
30	6.440	2.147E-15	100.000

As seen in Table 2, the four components have eigenvalue higher than 1.00 which is an indication of a factorial structure with 4 components. To further make sure about the components of the cultural identity model eigenvalue plot was also consulted (Figure 1).
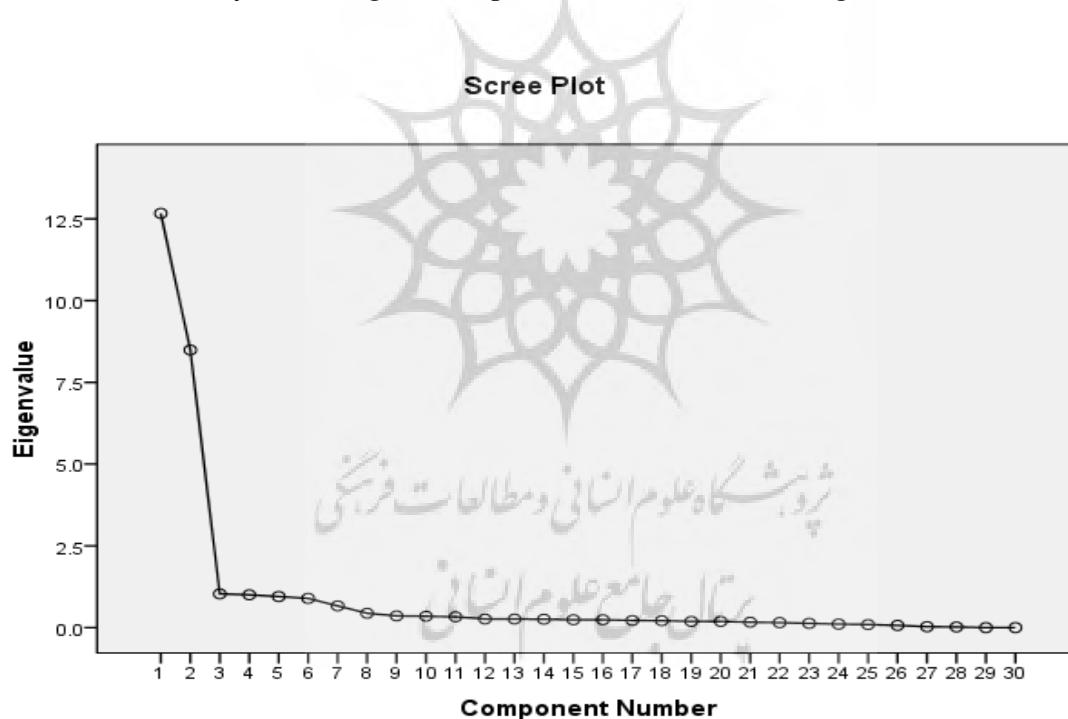

Figure 1. *Eigenvalue plot of the cultural identity construct*

In Figure 1, it can be seen that there are four points of break in the slope of the components which are in line with eigenvalue loadings in Table 2. It can be concluded that the cultural identity model which was theoretically revolved around 4 content areas was valid in terms of factorial construction. Table 3 shows the factor loading of the components and their related items.

Table 3. *Factor loading of the components and their related items*

Factors	Items	Loadings					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
Religion	I prefer going to holy Meca instead of going on a tour in Europe.	.870					
	I believe in fasting as a Muslim.	.835					
	I think we should prayer regularly as Muslims.	.724					
	Attending religious ceremonies should be part of our lifestyle.	.663					
	I feel calm when I go to holy places.	.646					
	Helping religious charities is a good activity.	.587					
	I think we should regularly visit the mosques for various religious activities.	.578					
	I like to be respectful to the Imams and do less joyful activities on their death anniversaries.	.525					
Culture	I like Iranian lifestyle and enjoy it.		.587				
	Iranian foods are among the best foods in the world.		.578				
	I think it is not bad to offer Taarof because it shows politeness.		.525				
	Being polite in front of parents and elderlies is necessary.		.479				
	I like participating in such ceremonies like Iranian wedding, Nowrooz, Yalda night etc.		.476				
	I prefer wearing normal Iranian clothing (e.g. trousers and shirt, Manto, etc.) rather those being more common in western countries (short pants, topless etc.).		.455				
	I prefer Iranian way of greeting (e.g. handshaking, kissing, hugging etc.).		.437				
	I like Iranian traditions like Ash Nazri, Sele Rahem (visiting relatives), Khastegari (marriage proposal), anniversaries etc.		.406				
Nationality	I respect all the Iranians regardless of their ethnicity.			.435			
	All the Iranians should have equal rights and have equal opportunities.			.400			
	I am proud of my national anthem.			.404			
	I like to be called an Iranian when I am abroad.			.437			
	I am proud of my nationality.			.42			

		2
	Iranians are a great nation.	.42 1
	Iran has great history and achievements.	.40 6
Language	Farsi is and should be the official language of Iranians.	.65 9
	I like Farsi and I am proud of being a Farsi speaker.	.65 2
	Currently Farsi needs to be further preserved and promoted.	.64 9
	Every Iranian needs to know Farsi regardless of what is their first language.	.64 5
	I like being a Farsi speaker instead of English speaker.	.63 0
	Farsi has the capability of being used in various contexts (e.g. academic, social, technical etc.).	.58 1
	I like to see Farsi as an international language in future.	.53 4

Reliability of the Questionnaire on Cultural Identity

After ensuring about the factorial structure of cultural identity scale, it was ready for reliability analysis using the internal consistency measure of Cronbach's Alpha. Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics and also Cronbach's Alpha report of the cultural identity questionnaire.

Table 4. *Descriptive statistics and also Cronbach's Alpha report of the cultural identity questionnaire*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Alpha
Cultural Identity	180	51.202	8.19582	2.11615	.851

Based on the Cronbach's Alpha analysis, the questionnaire had a reliability index of 0.81 which was quite above 0.70, hence the cultural identity questionnaire was reliable.

Table 5. *Descriptive statistics of initial sample*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TOEFL	300	12.00	61.00	45.9167	12.86188

The initial sample of participants had a mean score of 45.91 (SD=12.86). Accordingly, the learners within the score range of ±1SD should score 45.91±12.86. After homogenizing the participants was completed, participants completed the cultural identity questionnaire. Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics of 180 learners singled out of the initial sample of 300 learners in terms of language scores and cultural identity scores.

Table 6. *Descriptive Statistics of the Scores for the Cultural Identity Questionnaire and Achievement Scores*

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Achievement Scores	180	24.00	59.00	44.5778	9.04301	81.776
Cultural Identity Scores	180	16.00	79.00	44.9389	21.13806	446.817
Valid N (listwise)	180					

Discussion

The aim of the study was designing a model of Iranian cultural identity and the results indicated that Iranian cultural identity consists of 4 factors of religion, culture attitude, nationality attitude, and language. 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 culture identity measure consisting of eight factors. AAAS-R included subcomponents like Religious Beliefs and Practices, Preference for Things, Interracial Attitudes, Family Practices, Health Beliefs and Practices, Cultural Superstitions, Segregation, and Family Values. The Multi group Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) developed by Phinney (1992) had similar structure. MEIM measured one's sense of affirmation, commitment, and belonging to one's cultural/ethnic group, particularly in terms of one's attitudes and feelings towards that group. This scale included such components like ethnic attitudes and sense of belonging, ethnic identity achievement, and ethnic behaviors or practices.

In this study, religion beliefs were one of the main aspects of Iranian cultural identity. The next aspect of the cultural identity model was cultural attitude. In fact, this aspect dealt with Iranians' attitudes toward their culture. Pishghadm and Kamyabi, (2009) have focused on the role of cultural attitudes as part of a person's identity. Hinkel (1999) gave a more embracing definition, asserting "culture as the way of life of people, the social constructs that evolve within a group, the ways of thinking, believing and behaving that are imparted to members of a group in the socialization process" (cited in Jamalvandi, 2013, p. 91). Another component of the cultural identity was attitudes toward nationality which was about the way Iranians think about their Iranian citizenship. In other words, how Iranians were proud of their nationality. Pishghadm and Kamyabi (2009) also found out that nationality acts as a cultural bond to Iranian community and because of this fact, Iranians don't like to accept another culture or they prefer to be unaware of L2 culture and learn the language so this can be in contrast with the findings of a study conducted by Alptekin (2006) reporting that learners who are aware of cultural facts are better language learners. The last component was language component showing the cultural identity of the Iranians. Sociologists researching identity in the context of Iran including Ahmadi (2010) asserts that language plays an essential role in construction of identity, focusing on discourse. In addition, based on what Razmjoo and Izadpanah (2012) found, it's justified to say that learners' identity has a key role in their L2 proficiency. And according to Spenader (2011), those who are more open to L2 culture will be more successful in learning the language.

Conclusion

The findings of this study promise implications for language teachers. They need to have adequate knowledge about cultural identity and language learning and they need to know what aspect of cultural identity would affect the learners' motivation in learning a foreign language positively or negatively. Language teachers also need to be equipped with strategies to deal with challenges of conflict between cultural identity and foreign language learning.

Like most studies, the current study was suffering from some limitations related to the design of the study and the effect of unwanted variables. For instance, the variables of the study were measured through self-report measures like questionnaire that may impose some limitations. Therefore, it is possible that participants are not honest when answering. In addition, the research cannot guarantee that findings of the current study are directly related to cultural identity and second language learning.

The findings of the study are generalizable to the population of this study. Thus, to increase the generalizability of the findings, the same study should be replicated in other populations. Moreover, in this study interviews were used to collect data about cultural behaviors while ethnographical observations can produce much richer data about people's cultural identity. Therefore, future studies may include these to provide the language learning and teaching community with a more comprehensive picture of such items.

References

Ahmadi, H. (2010). *Principles of Iranian national identity.* Tehran: Institute for Cultural and Social Studies.

Alptekin, C. (2006). Cultural familiarity in inferential and literal comprehension in L2 reading. *System, 34*(5), 494-508.

Alptekin, C. (2008, May). *Multi competence revisited: From EFL to ELF. Plenary speech presented at the 5th ELT Research Conference-Bridging the gap between theory and practice in ELT*. Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey.

Arikan, A. (2011). Prospective English language teachers' perceptions of the target language and culture in relation to their socioeconomic status. *English Language Teaching, 4*(3), 232-242. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED524111.pdf.

Atkinson, D. (1999). TESOL and culture. *TESOL Quarterly, 33*(4), 625-654.

Bhugra, D. (2004). Migration, distress and cultural identity. *British Medical Bulletin. 69*(1), 1-13.

Bhugra, D., Bhui, K., Mallett, R., Desai, M., Singh, J., & Leff, J. (1999). Cultural identity and its measurement: A questionnaire for Asians. *International Review of Psychiatry, 11*(2-3), 244-249.

Brantmeier, C. (2004). Building a comprehensive theory of adult foreign language reading: A variety of variables and research methods. *The Southern Journal of Linguistics, 27*(1), 1-7.

Brewer, M., & Campbell, D. T. (1976). *Ethnocentrism and inter group attitudes*. New York: Halsted.

Brooks, N. (1997). Teaching culture in the foreign language classroom. In P. R. *Heusinkveld (Ed.), Pathways to culture* (pp. 11-37). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Brown, J. D. (Eds.). (2007). *Understanding research in second language learning: A teacher's guide to statistics and research design*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bukor, E. (2011). *Exploring teacher identity: Teachers' transformative experiences of re-constructing and re-connecting personal and professional selves*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation. Toronto: University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. http://hdl.handle.net/1807/31700

Cano, M., A. (2008). Acculturation. In N, J. Salkind, *Encyclopedia of educational psychology,* (pp. 8-9). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Chew, E. (2007). A concise history of teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia. In Y. H. Choi & B. Spolsky (Eds.), *English education in Asia: History and policies* (pp. 141-165). Seoul: Asia TEFL.

Crookes, G., & Schmidt, R. (1991). Motivation: Reopening the research agenda. *Language Learning, 41*(4), 469-512.

Dornyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational strategies in the language classroom Cambridge language teaching library.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dornyei, Z. (2003). *Questionnaires in Second Language Research: Construction,* Administration, and Processing. Mahway, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Duff, P. A., & Uchida, Y. (1997). The negotiation of teachers' sociocultural identities and practices in postsecondary EFL classrooms. *TESOL Quarterly, 31*, 451–487.

Edwards, J. (2009). *Language and identity: An introduction*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Englebert, J. (2004). Character or culture? *EFL Journal, 24*(2), 37-41.

Hinkel, E. (Ed.). (1999). *Culture in second language teaching and learning*.252Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ho, D. G. E. (2009). Systemic text analysis in the ESL writing classroom: Does it work? *RELC Journal: A Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 40*(3), 333-359.

Hui, D. (2005). False alarm or real warning? Implications for China of teaching. *English Journal of Educational Enquiry, 6*(1), 90-109.

Jamalvandi, B. (2013). Realization of Culture in English Textbooks in Chinese High School Level, Pan-Pacific. *Association of Applied Linguistics 16*(2), ٨٩-101.

Jason, W., O. (2009). Identity development. In E. M. Anderman and L. H.*Anderman, Psychology of Classroom Learning: An Encyclopedia,* (pp. 487-482). Macmillan Reference USA.

Kanno, Y.; Stuart, C. (2011). Learning to become a second language teacher: Identities in-practice. *The Modern Language Journal.* pp. 236-252.

Karabinar, S., & Guler, C. Y. (2012). The attitudes of EFL teachers towards teaching culture and their classroom practices. *Journal of Educational and Social Research, 2*(2), 113-126.

Kelleher, R. R. (1987). Attitude change during cross-cultural student teaching. *International Education, 17*(1), 5-13.

Kim, Y. Y. (1977). Communication patterns of foreign immigrants in the process of acculturation. *Human Communication Research, 4*(1), 66-77.

Klonoff, E. A., & Landrine, H. (2000). Revising and improving the African American acculturation scale. *Journal of Black Psychology, 26,* 235-261.

Leveridge, A. N. (2008). The relationship between language and culture and the implications for language teaching. [Online] Available: http://www.tefl.net (October 2011).

Liebkind, K. (2006). Ethnic identity and acculturation. In D. L. Sam & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *Cambridge handbook of acculturation psychology.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Maclure, M. (1993). 'Arguing for yourself: Identity as an organizing principle in teachers' jobs and lives'. *British Educational Research Journal, 19*(4), 311–22.

May, S. (2008). *Language and minority rights: Ethnicity, nationalism and the politics of language.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Morita, N. (2004). Discourse socialization through oral classroom activities in a TESL graduate classroom. *TESOL Quarterly, 34*(3), 279–310.

Nettle, D., & Romaine, S. (2000). *Vanishing voices: The extinction of the world's languages.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Norrizan R. (1993). *Cultural Considerations in ESL Texts; a Sociolinguistic Approach at Facilitating ESL Learning in Towards More Effective Learning and Teaching of English*. Proceedings Second International Conference.

Norton, B. (1997). Language, identity, and the ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly, 31*(3), 409-427.

Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change.* Harlow: Longman.

Norton, B. (2006). Identity as a sociocultural construct in second language education. In K. Cadman & K. O'Regan (Eds.), *TESOL in Context* [Special Issue], 22-33.

Norton, B., & Mckinney, C. (2011). An identity approach to second language acquisition. In D. Atkinson (Ed.), *Alternative approaches to second language acquisition* (pp.73-94). New York, New Jersey: Routledge.

Nunan, D., & Choi, J. (2010). *Language and culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Oller, J. W. (1995). Adding abstract to formal and content schema: Results of recent work in Peircean semiotics. *Applied Linguistics, 16*(3), 273-306.

Olson, J. (2002). Systemic change/teacher tradition: Legends of reform continue. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 34*(2), 129–137.

Phinney, J. S. (1992). The Multi-Group Ethnic Identity Measure: A new scale for use with diverse groups. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 7*, 156-176.

Phinney, J. S., Horenczyk, G., Liebkind, K., & Vedder, P. (2001). Ethnic identity, immigration and well-being: An interactional perspective. *Journal of Social Issues, 57*(5), 493–510.

Pishghadam, R., & Kamyabi, A. (2009). *The Relationship between accent and deculturation among EFL learners in Iran*. Paper presented at Yazd Conference, Iran.

Pishghadam, R., & Sadeghi, M. (2011). Culture and identity change among Iranian EFL teachers. *Ozean Journal of Social Sciences 4*(3), 147-162.

Razmjoo, S. A. & Izadpanah, M. A. (2012). On the relationship between L2 literacy (reading and writing) and identity processing styles of Iranian advanced EFL; learners. *RALS, 3*(2), 2-22.

Razmjoo, S. A., & Mavaddat, R. (2015). On the relationship between justice judgments, outcomes and identity orientations among Iranian EFL learners: A structural equation model. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research 3*(2), 101-117.

Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (3rd ed.) United Kingdom: Pearson Education

Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2010). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (3rd ed.) United Kingdom: Pearson Education.

Ritlyova, A. (2009). *Cultural Studies in Language Teaching. Milan Ferencik, Juraj Horvath* (eds.) Paper presented at the Language, Literature and Culture in a Changing Transatlantic World International Conference.

Ryder, A. G., Alden, L. E., & Paulhus, D. L. (2000). Is acculturation unidimensional or bidimensional?: A head-to-head comparison in the prediction of personality, self-identity, and adjustment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*, 49-65.

Schwarts, S. J., Zamboanga, B. L., Rodrigues, L., & Wang, S. C. (2008). The structure of cultural identity in an ethnically diverse sample of emerging adults. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 29*(2), 159 - 173. 2008

Skutnabb-Kangas, T., & Dunbar, R. (2010). *Indigenous children's education as linguistic genocide and a crime against humanity?* A global view. Gdldu Cdla: Journal of Indigenous

Peoples' Rights, 1. Guovdageaidnu /Kautokeino, Norway: Galdu, Resource Centre for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Spenader, A. J. (2011). Language learning and acculturation: Lessons from high school and gap-year exchange students. *Foreign Language Annals, 44*(2), 381-398.

Appendix A
Interview Questions
1. Do you see yourself as an Iranian who is different from other nations? In what way?
2. Do you think that Iranians have specific culture that distinguish them from other nations? Explain more.
3. Which cultural aspects of Iranians separate them from rest of the world (e.g. religion, nationality, etc.)? Give specific examples indicating Iranian cultural practice.
4. Can you tell about daily routines and regular events and tradition specific to Iranian culture?
5. Do you think people inside the Iranian borders can be called Iranian? Why?
6. Do you believe that speaking Persian forms part of Iranian culture? Explain more.

Appendix B
Cultural Identity Questionnaire

	Strongly agree	Agree	No idea	disagree	Strongly disagree
I prefer going to holy Meca instead of going on a tour in Europe.					
I believe in fasting as a Muslim.					
I think we should prayer regularly as Muslims.					
Attending religious ceremonies should be part of our lifestyle.					
I feel calm when I go to holy places.					
Helping religious charities is a good activity.					
I think we should regularly visit the mosques for various religious activities.					
I like to be respectful to the Imams and do less joyful activities on their death anniversaries.					
I like Iranian lifestyle and enjoy it.					
Iranian foods are among the best foods in the world.					
I think it is not bad to offer Taarof because it shows politeness.					
Being polite in front of parents and elderlies is necessary.					
I like participating in such ceremonies like Iranian wedding, Nowrooz, Yalda night etc.					
I prefer wearing normal Iranian clothing (e.g. trousers and shirt, Manto, etc.) rather those					

being more common in western countries (short pants, topless etc.).					
I prefer Iranian way of greeting (e.g. handshaking, kissing, hugging etc.).					
I like Iranian traditions like Ash Nazri, Sele Rahem (visiting relatives), Khastegari (marriage proposal), anniversaries etc.					
I respect all the Iranians regardless of their ethnicity.					
All the Iranians should have equal rights and have equal opportunities.					
I am proud of my national anthem.					
I like to be called an Iranian when I am abroad.					
I am proud of my nationality.					
Iranians are a great nation.					
Iran has great history and achievements.					
Farsi is and should be the official language of Iranians.					
I like Farsi and I am proud of being a Farsi speaker.					
Currently Farsi needs to be further preserved and promoted.					
Every Iranian needs to know Farsi regardless of what is their first language.					
I like being a Farsi speaker instead of English speaker.					
Farsi has the capability of being used in various contexts (e.g. academic, social, technical etc.).					
I like to see Farsi as an international language in future.					