Research into Iranian EFL Learners' Perceptions of Culture Management: A Questionnaire Development and Validation Study

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Abstract

The present study aimed at constructing a reliable and valid instrument that could explore EFL learners' perceptions of culture management. A focus group was held with EFL university students familiar with culture-related concepts, and the themes were extracted from a detailed analysis of transcripts. An extensive literature review and interviews with applied linguistics experts were conducted to generate the CM Questionnaire items. Subsequently, the draft questionnaire was piloted with 251 Iranian undergraduate EFL students studying at two public universities in Iran. An exploratory and a confirmatory factor analysis were run, and the overall factor loading estimates illustrated a satisfactory level of convergent validity for the developed Instrument. The satisfactory levels of factor loading and construct validity test supported the convergent validity of CM factors and their related items. The explored factors included Cultural Communication, Cultural Leadership, Cultural Awareness, Cultural Performance, and Culturally Relevant Teaching, with Cultural Communication as the most meaningful factor. The findings demonstrated that CMQ could be a valid and reliable instrument for investigating culture management perceptions. The implications of the study for EFL teachers, learners, and other stakeholders are also discussed along with some recommendations.

1. Introduction

Culture has always been a vital element, especially for nations with rooted civilization, dealing with the complex network of their past. As globalization occurred, the pluralism of culture has become more evident and, as a result, social development has been shifted towards a more people-centered orientation (Boschi, 2009).

The way culture and its values are defined is influenced by the members of the culture and the extent they focus on relationships (Cuddy, Crotty, Chong, & Norton, 2010). Scholars believe that the more visible aspects of culture, like rituals, shape the nations' behavior while the invisible features, as beliefs, are of greater significance to the occurring changes and differences between individuals and peoples. Language is realized as a tool to define and mirror culture (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003). Accordingly, language and culture are highly and delicately entwined, so nobody can separate them without damaging the significance of either (Brown, 1988). However, language learners' cultural differences may block their social roles even in a small social unit like the classroom (Brudnika, 2015).

Literature Review

Culture

Although culture has always played a significant role in global interactions, the failure in understanding has encouraged people to lessen focus on preserving and recording their own cultures and to blur the borders among their own and others'. This complexity is evident in a country like Iran, where not only the old deeply embedded civilization is preserved with bias, but also the western culture is frowned upon by Islamic ideology; therefore, the educational system is traditional and authorities' attitudes block new perspectives (Akbari, 2015). Individuals in every society are considered the 'mediator' of the culture, not the 'creator' of it and that is how "the common grounds built by peers in interaction" are explained (Dillenbourg, 1999, p. 2); that is, the issue is not how the students become a member of a community, but it is the matter of how the community with all its shared concepts and realities has emerged (Dillenbourg, 1999).

Definitions of culture lead to many other differences including communication, emotions, or cognition (Marcus & Kitayama, 1991). Eventually, this inevitable conflict is an important element in the human race's interaction; the conflict is defined as "perceived and/or actual" instabilities between "parties" regarding "substantive and/or relational issues" (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003, p. 599). Thus, the way individuals react to cultural disagreements varies and may end in either positive or negative experiences (Hammer, 2005).

Accordingly, the attitude towards teaching culture in a few lessons, introducing some songs, costumes, or celebrations does not suffice; an alternative perspective may introduce culture as a broader notion bonded with many linguistic and psycholinguistic concepts. To become proficient in a language is dependent on a true understanding of certain cultural contexts which needs an explicit embedment of cultural features within the linguistic forms of language (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003).

Language functions as a reflection of culture so it is possible to see the latter through the former (Brown, 1994). Due to this tangible influence of culture, especially in teaching a language, a huge body of studies has been done to figure out the nature and significance of

culture; however, culture has remained an intensely controversial issue in terms of curriculum designing and student training (Kramsch, 2013).

Understanding own culture is the foundation of cultural competency (Fantini, 2000); communication involves the ability to stand back from oneself to become aware of own values. Creating an environment, parallel with the permanently changing nature of the culture (Genc & Bada, 2005), can be an operational approach that can be practiced through "the procession of comprehensible classroom communicative activities to push forward" culture learning (Dai, 2011, p. 1031). In essence, scholars conceive culture descriptively; that is, a teacher-centered class is meaningless because the meaning is (re)-created through the communication in the class between students and between students and their context (Kirkebaek, Du & Jensen, 2013).

During performing communication activities in the classroom, problems arise when the peers or teachers are oblivious to the issue of cultural differences. Students grow via training that allows learners to choose what is appropriate for the context and the interaction they are playing a role in. Mismanagement of culture is not constrained only to the in situ behavioral misreading, but there are more severe consequences that may even change a life path (Weinstein, Curran & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003).

Culture Management

Culture management is perceived as a compromise, so a multi-faceted approach should be taken, since differences, even the implicit ones, exist in individuals' minds. Although any difference may seem undesirable, when managed constructively, the understanding will develop. However, culture mismanagement not only leads to the in situ behavioral misreading (Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003), but also may cause the loss of trust, bonding or motivation, which is increasingly evident as the involving sub-cultures of the context increases and different values come to discord (Mohammad, White & Prabhakar, 2009).

Nonetheless, own culture is a necessity to flourish creativity in individuals. Designating one specific target culture as a type of generality is not entirely valid (Kramsch, 1999), so managing culture or any type of cultural challenges in a predefined universal method is unjustifiable. Students come to learn with their values, thus theorists, institutions, and teachers need to have a comprehensive and deep perception of the learners' value systems (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2010).

Culture management training is beyond a set of strategies and practices; it is an annex to learners' understanding of their background, social experiences, prior knowledge, and learning styles (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke & Curran, 2004). Through this training learners gain openness to the cultural diversity they may encounter, seeking any community's membership (Dillenbourg, 1999).

Recent studies focus on culture and its relationship with language learning from different aspects (Pulverness, 2003). The reason for such focus is that without culture, L2 teaching is meaningless and inaccurate; it is unlikely to teach a language to students while they know nothing about people speaking that language. Students who are insufficiently aware of the target culture and are not exposed to cultural elements of the target society face complexities in their communication in the very society (Bada & Genc, 2005).

Culture management includes the key issues of culture, management, and communication (Mohammadian, 2017). This trend has been defined to contribute to communities crossing the demarcations, facilitating advances in essential skills and cultural negotiations between distinct groups (Botha, Vosloo, Kuner & Berg, 2009); many interpret the outcome as approaching towards a 'global village' (O'Brien, Alfano & Magnusson, 2007; p. 122). Although in the fields of business and leadership the issue has been highlighted by some scholars (e.g., Romani, Sackmann, Primecz), the concept of culture management has remained unknown in the field of EFL, and investigations that have been conducted so far are almost rare.

This study tends to imply that culture management is an iconic consideration in need of training since it may promise language learning, social interaction and personal fulfillment. In today's world, many irrecoverable mishaps are believed to be the consequence of ignoring cultural understanding and management (Talalakina, 2010), so joint efforts should be formed to incorporate the idea in the learning system. To move on the right track, the present research has been informed by the model introduced in the field of Communication by McAleese and Hargie (2005). This model presents "the distinct, yet inter-connected nature" (p. 19) of five underlying principles merging together to become a "cohesive whole" (p. 20). McAleese and Hargie's Model of Culture Management (2005) is displayed below:
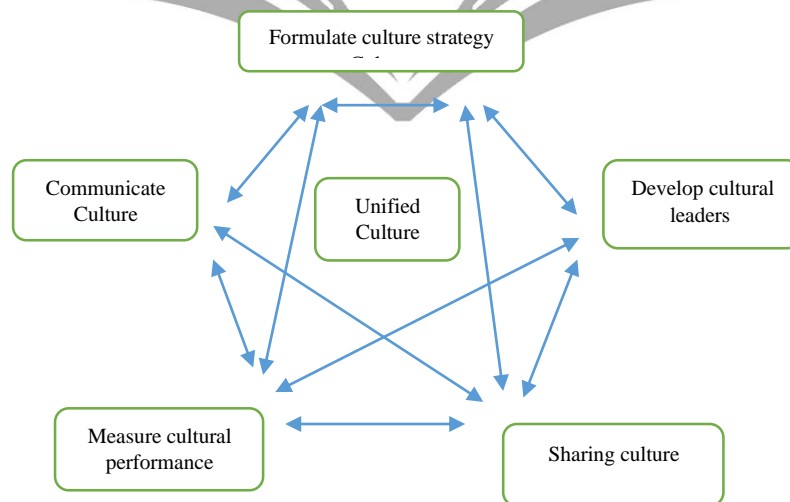

Figure 1 *McAleese and Hargie's Culture Management Model (2005)*

McAleese and Hargie's Model (2005) bolds out the balance which should be made between the assets and cultural factors so that a relationship can be made towards satisfaction by manipulating the shared values. This sharing promotes a two-way communication, engaging and energizing partners to become motivated and goal-oriented. Nevertheless, prior to any decision-making, the objectives must be defined, the incentives must be identified, competencies must be recognized and realities must be clarified. To this model in the field of business, the main issues are observing the organizational policy, boosting the profit and accomplishing the aims. Each member of the organization, while measuring the possibility of each decision and its probable results and consequences, is going to be a leader of his own, committed to a target but responsible to make the best, for himself and the company.

Comparing an organization, with a complicated nature and interconnected policies, moving toward a goal in a group of competent members, to the classroom where the teacher is trying to train students to be reliable, committed, motivated and wise to make a change, a model of culture management, yet appropriate and valid for the context of language learning could be promising.

Method

Design of the Study

This study was conducted to develop and validate an instrument to assess culture management. A mixed methods approach was adopted, including both quantitative (i.e. questionnaire) and qualitative (i.e. interview) research methods for an in-depth understanding of culture management. The initial phase, concerned with the theoretical framework, was followed by the second step aiming at developing, piloting and validating the questionnaire. Furthermore, this study aimed at answering two questions:

1. What are the underlying factors of culture management approach in an educational context?

2. What are the Iranian EFL students' perceptions of culture management in educational contexts?

Participants and Sampling

For the focus group, 10 senior students studying TEFL at Farhangiyan University were grouped for five 30-minute sessions to help the researchers collect culture management related concepts.

To evaluate the accuracy and appropriacy of drafted items, 3 university instructors (either associate or assistant professors) of applied linguistics were selected. Their evaluation was done through unstructured interviews. The participants for the questionnaire development were 251 EFL learners, including B.A. students majoring in English Literature at Allameh Tabataba'i University, and B.A. students majoring in TEFL at Farhangiyan University. Their age ranged from 18 to 24 and their proficiency level was upper-intermediate. They were selected through convenience sampling.

Data Collection Procedure

Zoltan Dornyei (2003) was the reference for the steps in developing this questionnaire. Initially, focus group discussion, including 10 senior EFL students, was held for five 30-minute sessions to derive culture management relevant concepts through moderated interaction. Focus group method was chosen to ask the mentioned participants about their perceptions of culture management. Through the discussion, it was likely to challenge the ideas asserted by students. However, the ambiance of the focus group maintained non-threatening so that the participants could produce ideas leading to better understanding and improvements. The discussion continued to reach the point of data saturation. Second, an extensive review of the relevant literature was performed within either TEFL or interdisciplinary courses relevant to business and management; the researcher's focus was on integrating the relevant knowledge in other fields with the core concerns in TEFL. Eventually, the collected materials and conceptualizations were shared with the 3 applied linguists for their valued consultation; their review and judgment of the draft helped the researcher with content validity as well as an appropriate layout, font type, and margin to ensure an acceptable face validity. The steps ended

in the generation of a set of items for the questionnaire's initial draft. Their reviews and comments were analyzed by the researcher for essential modifications and rewording of some items.

Subsequently, the discussed components and modified concepts were transformed into a questionnaire with 31 statements arranged on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The accuracy, as well as variations of the factor structure, was assessed through multiple-staged factor analysis and two types of factor analyses, confirmatory and exploratory, were conducted to estimate construct validity of culture management questionnaire.
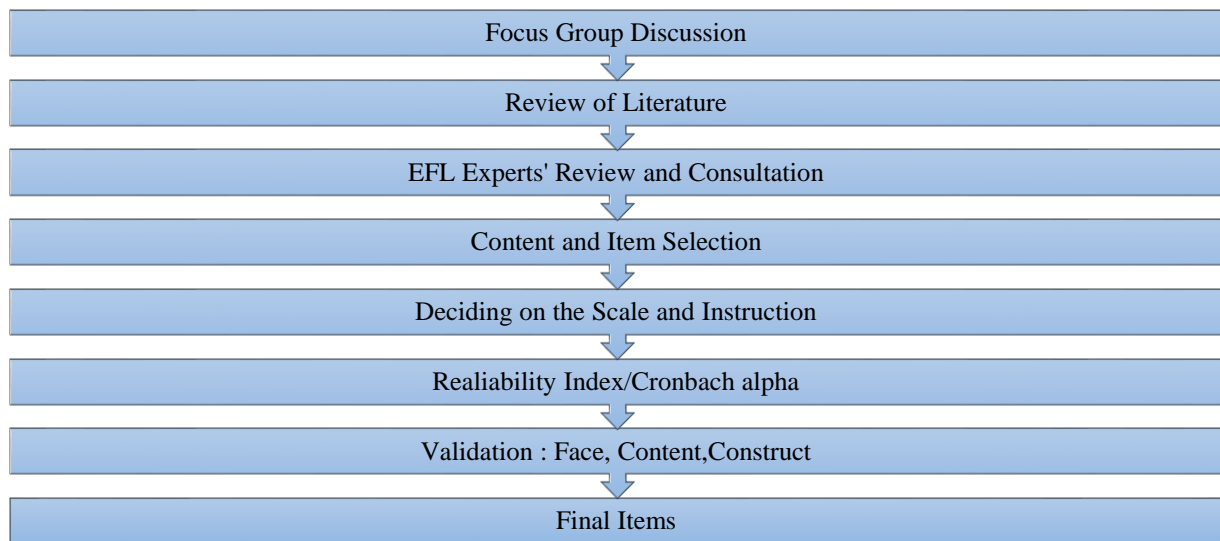
Focus Group Discussion
Review of Literature
EFL Experts' Review and Consultation
Content and Item Selection
Deciding on the Scale and Instruction
Realiability Index/Cronbach alpha
Validation : Face, Content,Construct
Final Items

Figure 2 *Steps of Questionnaire Development and Validation.*

Results

The objectives of the present study were to explore the reliability and validity of the perceptions concerned with Culture Management questionnaire (CMQ). The questionnaire with 31 items measured five components of culturally relevant teaching, cultural communication, cultural performance, cultural awareness, and cultural leadership.

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Indices

Table 1 displays the Cronbach's alpha reliability indices for the overall questionnaire, and its five components. As displayed in Table 1, the overall questionnaire enjoyed a reliability index of .820. The reliability index for the five components were as follows; Culturally relevant teaching (α = .844), Cultural communication (α = .829), Cultural performance (α = .844), Culture awareness (α = .802), and Cultural leadership (α = .766). These reliability indices were higher than the minimum index of .70 as proposed by Tseng, Dörnyei, and Schmitt (2006), and Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009).

Table 1 *Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Indices*

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Culturally relevant teaching	.844	5
Cultural communication	.829	7

Cultural performance	.844	6
Culture awareness	.802	6
Cultural leadership	.766	7
Culture management	.820	31

Exploratory Factor Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis using the principal axis factoring method and varimax rotation technique was carried out to probe the underlying constructs of the 31 items of the questionnaire. Before discussing the results, it should be mentioned that the KMO index of .821 was higher than the minimum acceptable criterion of .60, indicating that the present sample size was adequate to run the factor analysis. The significant Bartlett's test (χ^2 (465) = 3151.795, p = .000) showed that the correlation matrix was an appropriate one for running the factor analysis. In other words, the present data were factorable.

Table 2 *KMO and Bartlett's Test*

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.821
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3151.795
	Df	465
	Sig.	.000

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) helped to reduce the variables and it came up with latent variables explaining the variance in the study model. The SPSS extracted seven factors as the underlying constructs of the 31 items of the questionnaire. This seven-factor model accounted for 51.36 percent of the variance (Table 3).

Table 3 *Total Variance Explained*

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.488	17.704	17.704	5.038	16.250	16.250	3.528	11.380	11.380
2	3.397	10.957	28.660	2.973	9.591	25.841	3.087	9.958	21.338
3	3.035	9.790	38.450	2.566	8.278	34.119	2.909	9.385	30.724
4	2.887	9.312	47.762	2.435	7.854	41.973	2.844	9.175	39.899
5	2.594	8.368	56.130	2.103	6.783	48.756	2.709	8.740	48.638
6	1.118	3.605	59.735	.439	1.416	50.172	.433	1.398	50.036
7	1.048	3.381	63.116	.371	1.196	51.368	.413	1.332	51.368
8	.776	2.502	65.618						
9	.758	2.444	68.062						
10	.719	2.318	70.380						
11	.664	2.142	72.522						

12	.642	2.070	74.592
13	.616	1.987	76.579
14	.572	1.844	78.423
15	.569	1.834	80.257
16	.544	1.756	82.013
17	.534	1.723	83.736
18	.514	1.659	85.395
19	.489	1.578	86.973
20	.475	1.534	88.507
21	.440	1.419	89.926
22	.412	1.330	91.256
23	.386	1.246	92.502
24	.368	1.188	93.689
25	.351	1.131	94.820
26	.337	1.086	95.907
27	.307	.991	96.898
28	.288	.929	97.827
29	.252	.814	98.641
30	.232	.748	99.389
31	.189	.611	100.000

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Table 4 displays final Culture Management scale including 7 extracted factors and the loadings of the related items:

A: Factor one, cultural communication accounted for 17.70% of the total variance. This factor includes seven items (1, 6, 4, 7, 5 and 3). Item number 2 loaded under the sixth factor.

B: The second factor, accounting for 28.66% of the variance was cultural performance which includes six items (2, 3, 5, 4, 6 and 1), with loadings higher than .50.

Table 4 *Rotated Factor Matrix*

	Factor						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
CC1	.809						
CC6	.802						
CC4	.772						
CC7	.723						
CC5	.720						
CC3	.718						

CP2	.753				
CP3	.720				
CP5	.713				
CP4	.678				
CP6	.670				
CP1	.667				
CRT4		.816			
CRT2		.793			
CRT1		.736			
CRT3		.706			
CRT5		.698			
CL3			.712		
CL4			.705		
CL5			.679		
CL1			.672		
CL6			.670		
CL7			.605		
CA3				.703	
CA5				.692	
CA1				.669	
CA6				.650	
CA2				.628	
CA4				.600	
CC2					.384
CL2					.372

C: Five items (4, 2, 1, 3, and 5) were included under the third factor, labeled as culturally-relevant teaching. This factor accounted for 38.45% of variance.

D: The fourth factor, cultural leadership, accounting for 47.76% of variance, includes seven items (3, 4, 5, 1, 6, and 7), all with loadings higher than .50. The second item, however, loaded under the seventh factor.

E: Cultural awareness is the fifth factor with six related items (3, 5, 1, 6, 2, and 4). The fifth factor accounted for 56.13% of the variance.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was run to probe the underlying constructs of the beliefs concerning Culture Management and its training questionnaire. To confirm the model for the present study, there was the need to build a model in AMOS (Figure 3 displays the CFA model for beliefs concerning Culture Management and its training. This CFA model does not include the two items that did not show appropriate loadings (Table 4). Table 5 displays the unstandardized (b) and standardized (Beta) regression weights for the relationship between overall personality traits and motivation. Unstandardized regression weights are analogous to linear regression b-values, and can be interpreted as follows; a unit change in personality trait

results in b-units change on motivation and vice versa. Standardized regression weights are analogous to linear regression beta-values and can be interpreted as follows; a standard deviation change in personality trait results in b-standard deviations change on motivation and vice versa. Any Beta value equal to or higher than .30 indicates that the indicator (variable) has a significant contribution to its latent variable (underlying factor). These results showed that:

A: Cultural communication had a significant contribution to the culture management questionnaire (β = .347, p < .05), along with its six items: CC1 (β = .818, p < .05), CC6 (β = .807, p < .05), CC4 (β = .780, p < .05), CC5 (β = .726, p < .05), CC7 (β = .737, p < .05), and CC3 (β = .703, p < .05).

Table 5 *Standardized and Unstandardized Regression Weights*

			B	S.E.	C.R.	P	Beta
Cultural Communication (CC)	<---	Cultural Management (CM)	1.000				.347
Cultural Performance (CP)	<---	CM	1.247	.488	2.557	.011	.448
Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT)	<---	CM	1.187	.476	2.496	.013	.400
Cultural Leadership (CL)	<---	CM	.977	.390	2.508	.012	.425
Cultural Awareness (CA)	<---	CM	1.034	.411	2.517	.012	.438
CC1	<---	CC	1.000				.818
CC6	<---	CC	.993	.070	14.199	.000	.807
CC4	<---	CC	1.019	.075	13.589	.000	.780
CC5	<---	CC	.820	.066	12.391	.000	.726
CC7	<---	CC	.929	.074	12.616	.000	.737
CC3	<---	CC	.488	.041	11.895	.000	.703
CP2	<---	CP	1.000				.766
CP3	<---	CP	.998	.088	11.341	.000	.739
CP5	<---	CP	.976	.088	11.114	.000	.725
CP1	<---	CP	.485	.046	10.442	.000	.683
CP4	<---	CP	.803	.077	10.369	.000	.679
CP6	<---	CP	.471	.046	10.210	.000	.669
CRT4	<---	CRT	1.000				.823
CRT2	<---	CRT	.993	.073	13.515	.000	.796
CRT1	<---	CRT	.914	.073	12.516	.000	.747
CRT3	<---	CRT	.467	.040	11.745	.000	.709
CRT5	<---	CRT	.380	.032	11.759	.000	.710

			B	S.E.	C.R.	P	Beta
CL4	<---	CRT	1.000				.720
CL3	<---	CRT	1.044	.108	9.658	.000	.686
CL5	<---	CL	1.105	.114	9.678	.000	.688
CL6	<---	CL	.978	.102	9.626	.000	.684
CL1	<---	CL	.478	.051	9.385	.000	.665
CL7	<---	CL	.538	.061	8.770	.000	.618
CA3	<---	CA	1.000				.689
CA5	<---	CA	.592	.063	9.391	.000	.704
CA1	<---	CA	1.052	.115	9.191	.000	.685
CA6	<---	CA	.864	.099	8.758	.000	.647
CA2	<---	CA	.542	.063	8.637	.000	.637
CA4	<---	CA	.447	.053	8.374	.000	.614

B: The factor, cultural performance, (β = .448, p < .05) had significant contributions to the CMQ. All its included six items, CP2 (β = .766, p < .05), CP3 (β = .739, p < .05), CP5 (β = .725, p < .05), CP1 (β = .683, p < .05), CP4 (β = .679, p < .05), and CP6 (β = .669, p < .05) had significant contributions to the cultural performance.

C: Culturally-relevant teaching had a significant contribution to the overall questionnaire (β = .400, p < .05) and the five included items had significant contributions to CLT: CRT4 (β = .823, p < .05), CRT2 (β = .796, p < .05), CRT1 (β = .747, p < .05), CRT3 (β = .709, p < .05), and CRT5 (β = .710, p < .05).
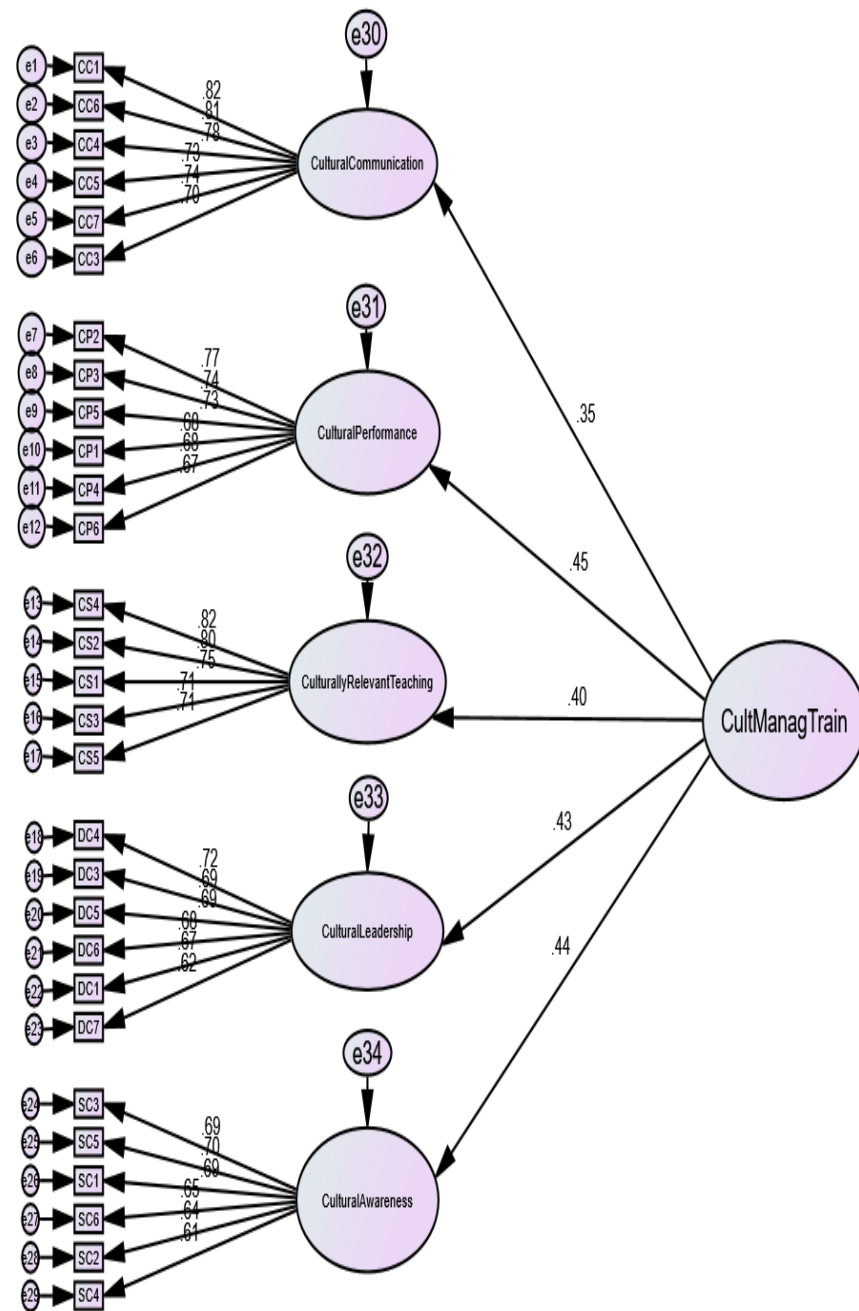
Figure 3 *Model of Perceptions Concerning Culture Management*

D: Cultural leadership with a significant contribution to the CMQ (β = .425, p< .05), included six items, CL4 (β = .720, p < .05), CL3 (β = .686, p < .05), CL5 (β = .688, p < .05), CL6 (β = .684, p < .05), CL1 (β = .665, p < .05), and CL7 (β = .618, p < .05), all showed a significant contribution to cultural leadership.

E: The factor, cultural awareness, (β = .438, p < .05) had significant contributions to the CMQ. All its included six items, CA3 (β = .689, p < .05), CA5 (β = .704, p < .05), CA1 (β = .685, p < .05), CA6 (β = .647, p < .05), CA2 (β = .637, p < .05), and CA4 (β = .614, p < .05) had significant contributions to the cultural performance.

The results discussed so far answer the first research question intending to find the underlying factors of culture management approach in an educational context. It can be claimed that the "culture management approach in education" has five underlying factors all of which have significant contributions to the overall model. The results discussed under Table 1 also supported the reliability of the questionnaire and its components.

Table 6 displays the model fit indices. All results showed that the present model enjoyed a good fit.

A: The following absolute fit indices indicates the suitability of the results estimated by the measurement model (Figure 3);

- The results of chi-square were non-significant (χ^2 (372) = 382.108, p > .05)

- The ratio of chi-square over the degree of freedom; i.e., 382.108 / 372 = 1.027 was smaller than 3.

- The standardized root mean residual (SRMR) of .039 was lower than .10.

- The root mean square of error approximation (RMSEA) of .000 was lower than .05.

- Its confidence intervals [.000, .025} were also lower than .05.

- The probability of close fit (PCLOSE) of 1.00 was higher than .05.

- The Goodness of fit index (GFI) of .912 was higher than .90.

Table 6 *Model Fit Indices*

Fit Indices	Labels	Statistic	D.F.	P-Value	Criterion	Conclusion
Absolute	X^2	382.108	372	.348	>.05	Good Fit
	X^2R	1.027	---	---	<=3	Good Fit
	SRMR	.039	---	---	<=.10	Good Fit
	RMSE	.000	---	---	<=.05	Good Fit
	90%C	.000, .025	---	---	<=.05	Good Fit
	PCLC	.991	---	---	=>.05	Good Fit
	GFI	.912	---	---	=>.90	Good Fit
Incremental	TLI	.997	---	---	=>.90	Good Fit
	CFI	.998	---	---	=>.90	Good Fit
	NFI	.974	---	---	=>.90	Good Fit
	IFI	.998	---	---	=>.90	Good Fit
	Hoelter	274	---	---	=>200	Sampling Adequacy

B: The incremental fit indices also proved fit of the model;

- Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) of .996 was higher than .90.

- Comparative fit index (CFI) of .996 was higher than .90.

- Incremental fit index (IFI) of .996 was higher than .90.

And finally, the Hoelter index of sampling adequacy, i.e., 274, was higher than 200. These results indicated that the present sample size was adequate for running the measurement model in Figure 3.

Exploring the Second Research Question

The CMQ was developed and employed to figure out the Iranian EFL students' perceptions of culture management in educational contexts. The results of the study, based on CM components, are displayed in Table 7 which specifies the descriptive statistics for the five components of culture management in an educational context. The results indicated that Cultural Communication was the most favorable CM component (M = 3.16), followed by Cultural Leadership (M = 3.11), Cultural Awareness" (M = 2.87), Cultural Performance (M = 2.78), and Culturally-Relevant Teaching (M = 2.30).

Table 7 *Descriptive Statistics; Components of Perceptions Concerning Culture Management*

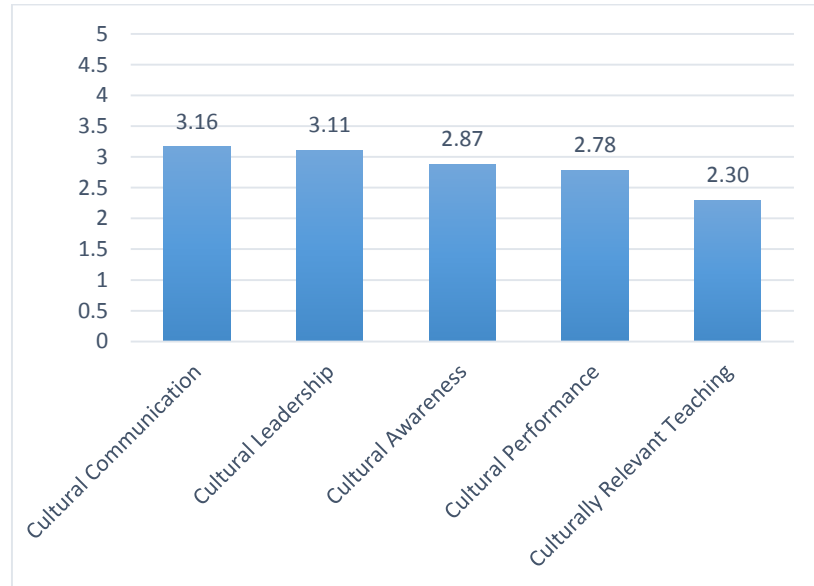|	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
cultural communication	251	3.16	.835	.697
cultural leadership	251	3.11	.694	.482
cultural awareness	251	2.87	.701	.492
cultural performance	251	2.78	.849	.721
culturally relevant teaching	251	2.30	.855	.732

Figure 4 *Means on Perceptions Concerning Culture Management*

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to develop and evaluate an instrument to measure EFL students' culture management. This study collected culture management related items, designed a draft, piloted and validated the culture management questionnaire (CMQ) to figure out the underlying factors of culture management approach and Iranian EFL students' perceptions of CM. A focus group including 10 senior students contributed to the researchers' formation of a theoretical

framework by discussing the themes related to culture management. The focus group participants actively took part in a discussion through a "non-directive technique" leading to a controlled outcome. The moderator (one of the researcher in this study) had the role of the facilitator of the discussion (Zhu & Fliatz, 2005). The focus group discussion transcripts were analyzed and the obtained themes were finalized after an extensive review of related literature. In the next step, the extracted themes and organized conceptualizations were consulted with 3 experts of applied linguistics through unstructured interviews. The final 31 items were written in the form of a 5-point Likert Scale instrument which was piloted to be evaluated regarding its reliability and validity.

The confirmatory factor analysis specified that the data was consistent with the factor structure. Exploratory factor analysis found out the underlying factors and the relationships between the variables, so the construct validity was established. Both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses confirmed the convergent validity of the questionnaire's items and relevant factors. The usage of acceptable layout, font type and margin contributed to face validity. Also, the review of the items done by three professionals in applied linguistics to judge whether the items were consistent with the purpose of the study ensured its content validity. Besides, the internal consistency of the newly developed tool was quite satisfactory as estimated by Cronbach's alpha, and its high reliability value was approved in this study. The statistical analysis is an indicator of a model of 5 factors contributing to culture management. Thus, this study developed a questionnaire and acknowledged it as a reliable and valid instrument for a better understanding of the issue under study.

According to the results obtained, among the five defined factors of the framework in this study, cultural communication showed the highest mean (3.16) and was proved to be extremely important. Hall's widely known statement (1959, p. 186), "Culture is communication and communication is culture", acclaims the effective role the issue of communicating plays in learning culture. This two-dimensional definition forms a give-and-take relationship to learn culture through communication while communication mirrors the culture of the interrelated community. Communication is "a dynamic process in which people attempt to share their internal states with other people through the use of symbols" (Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel, (2009, p. 16). Kramsch (1999) also highlights the significant role of communication clarifying communities' divergent roles, perspectives, attitudes, and values; however, they should be trained to communicate with one another, keeping their own and perceiving the others' culture. The results will be a prosperous lasting interaction as understanding of culture has been expanded (Alapo, 2017). The significance of communication in managing culture has also been acclaimed in this study.

Additionally, cultural leadership is the next factor of culture management which had the high mean of 3.11. This noticeable role is also magnified by Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis (2016) and many educational 'reformers'; accordingly, leadership has been defined to have a key to 'reform education', a role appreciated as that of a teacher (p. 1273). Therefore, Noman and Gurr (2020) associate leadership with responsibility and take both as crucial elements of education; they assert that leadership should be included and merged into the educational curriculum (p. 34). Leadership is based on 'the pattern of interaction between a leader and a

follower' (Norman and Gurr, 2020, p. 34). Cultural awareness with a high mean of 2.87 was another significant factor. Cakir (2006), similarly, named cultural awareness as a notable capability of a 'competent' (p. 3) language learner whose performance is both socially and culturally acceptable. Tomlinson (2001) not only acclaimed the importance of cultural awareness for a better understanding of both language and learning but also came up with some suggestions to empower this awareness.

Nevertheless, through the review of related literature, personality was claimed to be in relationship with the learner's way of managing cultural complexities, so some items covered the factor of personality. However, in subsequent revisions, the personality-related items were subdued and the concept of personality was excluded from the underlying factors of culture management. Many scholars still approve the importance of personality when facing cultural issues. Allport (1937), for instance, in his psychology of personality hypothesis, defined a solid tie between personality and culture; many of later scholars, such as Cheung, Leung, Song, and Zhang (2001) and Dmitrieva and Gulinov (2018) agreed with Allport's hypothesis. Nevertheless, there were others like McCrae and Costa (1996 & 1999) who questioned this relationship between personality and culture; they believe the two concepts to be completely independent from each other.

Implications

In the field of foreign language learning, the concept of culture management is relatively new. The questionnaire developed in this study could be an initiative to develop a meaningful measurement for culture management and to distance from the old native-nonnative version of teaching culture. The new perspective may help institutions, teachers, and decision-makers to better understand that own culture should be kept and even empowered to master the target, soften differences and manipulate similarities; this idea would be more impressive than the typical immersion or the old-fashioned total resistance.

Limitations and Future Directions

One limitation of this study is the fact that the selection procedure was not meant to be sensitive to gender, nor did it put an age range to narrow down the scope. Therefore, the scope of the instrument could be developed further with the variances in population, by electing the participants purposefully to compare genders or specific age bands.

As this instrument is the first in its category dealing with the idea of culture management in the field of language teaching, subsequent studies can be conducted using this scale to study the very concept in detail, yet in a different setting or for divergent fields.

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Appendix

Dear participants:

The main purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data about your beliefs concerning culture management and its training. Your careful completion of the questionnaire will contribute to real data and is greatly appreciated.

Directions: Please answer the items in this questionnaire as carefully as possible. There is no right or wrong answer, so please respond as honestly as possible. Please note that the information will be kept confidential and will be used for academic research purposes.

Part 1: Demographic Information

Gender: Male ◯   Female ◯   Age:
Are you a future English teacher?
Yes ◯   No ◯

Part 2: Please check (✓) in the box that best reflects your opinion about each of the following statements using this scale:

strongly agree (SA)

agree (A)

neutral (N)

disagree (D)

strongly disagree (SD)

Items	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. EFL students should understand the social context in which they interact.					
2. Students should be given a chance to have active participation in class discussions.					
3. Students should learn to compromise when there is a disagreement.					
4. Optimistic views on cultural differences should be encouraged in the classroom.					

5. When I face cultural differences, I generally try to avoid making judgments.					
6. Language learners should be helped to build trust with their community members to communicate more effectively.					
7. EFL instructors should teach students problem-solving skills and strategies.					
8. EFL students should gain a deep understanding of their own culture.					
9. Target language culture should be taught along with EFL students' home culture.					
10. Language learners should be helped to understand their learning styles.					
11. EFL students should become more engaged in their language learning process.					
12. Language teachers should help their students to recognize their strengths and weaknesses in their learning situation.					
13. Language learners should identify and follow the objectives of their curriculum to achieve communicative competence.					
14. EFL learners should learn about decision-making for different learning occasions.					
15. Language learners need to respect other people's cultures.					
16. In foreign language learning, students' risk-taking and innovative behavior leads to success.					
17. EFL students should try to be fair and see the conflicts from both sides.					
18. Individual EFL learners should adapt and change continually to survive in the learning process.					
19. Communication should be emphasized in the classroom for a better understanding of the culture.					
20. Cross-cultural knowledge (both local and target) should be included in the class activities and tasks.					
21. Individual language learners' values should be in agreement with community values.					
22. Language learning is easier when the learner can tolerate change and be flexible.					
23. Understanding culture leads to balance and order in one's social behavior.					
24. Culture sharing helps language students be satisfied with their learning process.					
25. EFL instructors should provide learners with explicit feedback on their cultural understanding and application.					

26. Language students should learn to share their cultural knowledge, skills, and strategies.					
27. EFL instructors should set realistic expectations of the target language culture for students.					
28. Openness is important for language learners to become culturally aware and understand different cultures effectively.					
29. Individual language learners should feel valued in their community to succeed.					
30. Two-way communication between EFL learners and their teacher help them stay motivated through acquiring cultural knowledge.					
31. Language learners should be helped to act wisely in critical situations.					