

Developing and Validating a Pluralistic Curriculum (PC) Model for English Teaching in Iranian High Schools

Khatereh Zohrabi¹, Seyyed Ayatollah Razmjoo^{2*}, Alireza Ahmadi³

¹Ph.D. Candidate of TEFL, Department of Foreign Language & Linguistics, International Campus, Shiraz University, Iran, khaterezhohrabi@yahoo.com

^{2*}Professor of TEFL, Department of Foreign Language & Linguistics, Shiraz University, Iran, arazmjoo@rose.shirazu.ac.ir

³Associate Professor of TEFL, Department of Foreign Language & Linguistics, Shiraz University, Iran, arahmadi@shirazu.ac.ir

Abstract

One manifestation of the changes in societies is the emergence of pluralistic/multicultural societies which necessitates using intercultural/pluralistic education elements in education systems. Hence, this study aimed at developing and validating a Pluralistic Curriculum (PC) Model for English language teaching (ELT) in Iranian high schools. To this aim, a concurrent design (qualitative + quantitative) within a mixed methods approach was used. Participants of the study were 30 Iranian (17 male and 13 female) curriculum experts from Iranian Curriculum Studies Association (ICSA) who were selected through snowball sampling. Results of data analysis revealed the following components for PC: pluralistic education, pluralistic evaluation, racial and ethnic equality, social class equality, linguistic diversity and equality, gender equality, cultural diversity and tolerance of difference. Results of data analysis also showed that the proposed model consists of four elements namely, content, teaching/learning strategies/methods, evaluation and goal. Moreover, it was found that the proposed PC model is valid from the viewpoint of the curriculum experts. This promising finding implies that the proposed model can be implemented by ELT practitioners in the Iranian high schools. Furthermore, it can be used as a valid scale to see whether educational curriculums most particularly EFL/ESL curriculums at different levels (primary, junior high school, high school, and tertiary education) are developed in line with pluralistic curriculum or not.

Keywords: Curriculum; Pluralism; Pluralistic Education; Pluralistic Curriculum (PC) Model

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1. Introduction

Foreign language learning/teaching, including English language learning/teaching, is a complex phenomenon influenced by many complexities and challenges. Recently, the field has been exposed to some challenges in one way or another, some of which may be partially attributed to globalization. Globalization has turned English Language Learning (ELT) into an inevitable element in today's life. In the so-called global village, individuals should learn to adapt themselves to cultural and social changes. Under such conditions, meaning and knowledge should be constructed and exchanged through focusing on multiple symbolic systems to enhance students' communication abilities within the socio-cultural environment. Moreover, such a knowledge construction can help the individuals interact better in a global setting, and find new solutions for common human problems (Sadeghi, 2012). One manifestation of the changes in societies is the emergence of pluralistic/multicultural societies which necessitates using intercultural/pluralistic education elements in education systems. As put by Stika (2012), societies have experienced a paradigm shift towards pluralism or the idea that there are multiple competing and conflicting value systems/moralities and no value system is superior to the other. He believes that the aim of pluralistic education is to create new modes of thought and bodies of knowledge in which diversity is an essential resource. Moreover, a new generation of learners has been generated with new and diverse needs that education systems must satisfy. Students and their conditions, in all over the world including Iran, have changed profoundly over the last 10-15 years. The new conditions are characterized by more complexity and diversity in learners' needs, wants, expectations, aims, ambitions, ideals, etc. As stated by Giselbrecht (2009), in response to the new needs of the new generation, attitudes towards cultural tolerance and openness has been changed, pluralistic views towards education have been established, and an intercultural/pluralistic understanding of multicultural social environment has been considered in education. In the context of education, pluralistic ideas can be applied through developing of a global view of language/culture learning and teaching. To him, pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures are democratic concepts which appreciate the need to diversity of all linguistic and cultural varieties, support attitudes of openness, and tolerance and understanding towards the cultures, social structures and values of other communities. According to him:

Pluralism is the recognition that identities, traditions, histories, and material lives form in relation to and from engagement with one another, and that articulation of differences always risks transformation. Pluralism rejects both essentialism and identity-blindness that, respectively, attribute effects to innate differences or else deny the effect of difference. Pluralism sustains the possibility that other ways of being and knowing are viable

and necessary. Pluralistic approaches to teaching represent both an innovative and effective answer to the question of how to confront the new educational requirements of a multicultural Europe (p. 12).

Pluralistic approach puts emphasis on the social changes and social justice and is aimed at educating a global citizen, a critical analyst, a political participant, a proponent of cultural interaction and a well-informed individual (Motamed, Yarmohammadian, & Yusefy, 2013a). McConnell (2008) believes that in pluralism, difference is not considered as a liability that must be managed, but it is a crucial resource, a positive marker of identity which productively challenges universals with contingencies and is not merely the opposite of norms. It is the result of intentional social practices wherein difference is preferred to similarity. To him, pluralism is a model of social engagement in which any particular social configuration is regarded as finite and limited rather than open and unending.

The review of the related studies shows that there are several arguments for pluralist curricula: ontological and epistemological claims. The main assumption of the ontological claims is that the nature of the world is such that no single theory could explain it (see Dow, 1996, 1997, 2004; Holcombe, 2008; Mäki, 1997). And the main assumption of the epistemological claims is that no single standard exists for adjudging one theory as being the best one, and that all theories are fallible (Budzinski, 2008; Mearman, 2008).

Furthermore, curriculum is considered as an inseparable part of any education system. Therefore, curriculum renewal is an ongoing process in educational planning, and Iranian education system is not an exception in this regard; besides, curriculum renewal provides educators as well as the curriculum developers with the opportunity to incorporate new insights and expectations in academic programs (Riazi & Razmjoo, 2004).

Accordingly, as put by Pring (2004), we live in a time of change, and change affects the content of curriculum. It also seems that students and their conditions, in all over the world including Iran, have changed profoundly over the last 10-15 years (Alibakhshi & Rezaee, 2014). The new conditions are characterized by more complexity and diversity in learners' needs, wants, expectations, aims, ambitions, ideals, etc.

However, despite the belief that pluralistic approaches to language learning are an innovative and efficient response to new educational needs and demands of the multicultural and multilingual world, and schools should address pluralism through focusing on the cultural identifications of students, parents and communities (Ferrero, 2003), having a look at the Iranian education system shows that pluralism has not found its own way into the ELT system. In other words, proponents of pluralistic pedagogy believe that

pluralistic principles should be incorporated into curriculums to guarantee that educational systems do not fall behind the social, political and cultural developments. Moreover, ELT administrators and practitioners should also pave the way to make changes in the students' identity and prepare them for living in today's global village (Sadeghi, 2010). However, Iranian education and ELT system have not yet attempted to take the pluralistic perspectives into account in education. This is while Iran is a country wherein diverse cultures with different languages, dialects, accents, customs, and worldviews co-exist. The review of the literature shows that the components of pluralistic ELT curriculum have not been explored yet, at least in the context of Iran. To partially bridge this gap, this study aimed at developing and validating a pluralistic ELT curriculum model for the Iranian high schools. To this aim, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What are the components of a pluralistic curriculum (PC)?
2. What PC model can be proposed for ELT in the Iranian high schools?
3. Does the developed pluralistic curriculum model have the required psychometrics features?

2. Literature Review

Stilwell (2006) argued for four reasons for using pluralism in economics teaching, using a basic interpretive method. To him, pluralism should be used in teaching economics as a response to the underdeveloped state of economics knowledge, as a tool for recognizing the political nature of the field, as a prerequisite for improvement in economic analysis and research, and as a pedagogy aimed at enhancing students' capacities for critical thinking. Sadeghi (2010) analyzed the content of Iran's National Curriculum to see whether it reflects the components of multi-cultural education. To this aim, he benefited from content analysis method. The results showed that while multi-cultural components have been taken into account in methods of the assessment of educational achievement, philosophical and scientific foundations, principles governing the educational programs and goal descriptions of educational levels sections, teaching-learning strategies section has ignored the components. Colombo (2013) presented a comprehensive introduction to the pluralism in education and its implications, using a descriptive method. He has mentioned the rise of socialism and pluralism as major challenges for education systems. To him, pluralism can be used in education systems as a way to manage today's classrooms replete with increased diversity. Motamed, Yarmohammadian and Yusefy (2013a) designed a pluralistic curriculum model for the Iranian education system in general. To this aim, they used Conceptual Analysis. Researchers concluded that some factors such as racial/ethical inequity,

linguistic pluralism, gender inequality, social inequality, and religious diversity should be incorporated in the Iranian education system. This study is considered as a base study for conducting the present one; However, the main point of difference between the two is that while the former has been concerned with the Iranian education system in general, the latter is going to address the issue in ELT in particular. Motamed, Yarmohammadian and Yusefy (2013b) compared pluralistic and unitarian approaches in relation to ten elements of curriculum based on Akker's view, using a descriptive-interpretative method. Results of the study showed that the two approaches are remarkably different in terms of the main elements of curriculum. Thomson (2014) investigated critical strategies and practices concerned with multicultural missing gaps through a survey research. Results indicated that using a 35% traditional and 65% critical pedagogy mixture in teaching multicultural education may help education candidates become efficient difference makers in the future. Daryai-Hansen et al. (2015) addressed how recent pluralistic approaches have been employed in curriculum transformations at national and regional levels. To this aim, they illustrated cases of Austria, French-speaking Switzerland and Spain. This study concluded that incorporating pluralistic approaches at the macro-level may lead to reducing discrepancy between theory and practice. Mostafazadeh, Keshtiaray and Ghulizadeh (2015) conducted a qualitative study to identify the main components of a multicultural education. The results of their study revealed that pluralistic curriculum consists of different components: anti-racism education, acceptance of diversity and plurality, peaceful coexistence, educational justice, flexibility in educational programs, variety of evaluation methods, training of human capacities, strengthening of respect for the differences, protecting the minority languages, and strengthening multi-cultural and inter-cultural communication.

As shown in the reviewed literature, while the concepts of pluralism and pluralistic education have been touched in some studies in the Iranian and Foreign contexts, so far, to the best knowledge of the researcher, no study has developed a PC model for ELT in the Iranian high schools.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

Participants of the study consisted of 30 Iranian (17 male and 13 female) curriculum experts from Iranian Curriculum Studies Association (ICSA) who were selected through snowball sampling. That is, initially, the researcher identified some curriculum experts in Iranian Curriculum Studies Association (ICSA), then, the identified experts suggested others who would be appropriate for the sample.

3.2. Materials and Instruments

Due to the nature of the research questions, a mixed-research design (exploratory) was used: qualitative-quantitative. In order to answer the first and the second research questions, a qualitative research design (phenomenological method and content/document analysis) was used. Quantitative research design (survey method) was used to answer the third question.

3.3. Procedure

The data of the present study were collected in two phases. The first phase of the study required qualitative instruments. To this aim, first, components of a PC were identified through reviewing the existing literature and documents on pluralism and pluralistic education, and interviewing curriculum experts. Regarding the later, semi-structured face-to-face individual interviews with open-ended questions were conducted to understand the phenomenon of pluralistic curriculum from interviewees' own perspectives with the assumption that the important reality is what people perceive to be. Also, face to face interviewing made understanding participants' verbal responses via their nonverbal cues possible. The interview, consisting of five open-ended questions, was designed through consulting previous research and two colleagues expert in the pluralism area.

Then, 10 experts in curriculum development were selected through snowball sampling and interviewed individually. Next, components of a PC were identified through merging the data obtained from the interviews and reviewing existing literature and documents on pluralism and pluralistic education. Then, based on the identified components, a PC model for ELT at the high school level was developed using grounded theory. In the second phase, a researcher-made questionnaire was designed based on the proposed model to validate the proposed model from the viewpoint of the curriculum experts. Finally, the questionnaire was filled by 30 (17 male and 13 female) curriculum experts.

3.4. Data Analysis

Different data analysis techniques were applied. For the first phase of the study, content analysis techniques were applied. That is, content of the existing literature and documents on pluralism and pluralistic education was qualitatively analyzed followed by interview with the experts. The interviews were all conducted in Persian. In order to elicit the experts' in-depth perceptions, the interviewer allowed the conversation to move on smoothly in a more interactive manner. Interviews were first transcribed and multiple copies of the transcripts were printed. The transcripts were then read for topic ordering to draw out and list topics linked to the original research questions

of the study. A second meticulous reading of transcripts helped the researchers identify the explicit and implicit categories which emerged within each topic. The categories were color coded. In case of more than one category in a topic, numeric coding was used. A third reading for content helped to identify the quotes that were aligned with each category within the topics. The quotes were labeled according to the categories they represented. For the second phase of the study, the collected data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, and confirmatory factor analysis.

4. Results

The first research question aimed at exploring the components of PC model. The interviews and the existing literature and documents on pluralism and pluralistic education were content analyzed. The following components were extracted.

a. Pluralistic education. As believed by experts and as stated in the documents, pluralistic education is an educational concept which aims at the development in students of a so-called 'pluralistic attitude'. For its epistemological foundations the concept is based on Dewey and for its educational and psychological underpinning on the Vygotskian tradition.

b. Pluralistic evaluation. The content analysis of the documents and interviews showed that the pluralistic evaluation framework is a tool for considering diverse kinds of goodness in the design and evaluation of policies. It is based on the notion that there is a plurality of kinds of goodness, among which a good policy ought to aim for a balance that accounts for the interests of diverse stakeholders.

c. Racial and ethnic equality. Participants argued that the content of a curriculum should not be biased to a particular race and ethnicity. Black, white, Asian, African etc. should not be deprived of an appropriate curriculum.

d. Equality of opportunities for all social classes. Participants also argued that all social classes within a country should have equal chance of being exposed to the same curriculum. The voices of all social classes should be heard. They should have the same chance to make decisions about the content. The same was stated in the relevant documents.

e. Linguistic diversity and equality. Participants of the study argued that EFL learners in an EFL classroom might have different linguistic backgrounds. They might have different first languages. Therefore, all differences should be taken into account and materials and curriculum should not be biased to one particular language.

f. Gender equality. Participants also argued that male and female students' attitudes towards ELT should be taken into account, their voices should be heard, and neither male nor female students should fall behind missions and objectives. Content of the curriculum, teaching methods, assessment strategies should not lead to segregation and discrimination.

g. Cultural diversity and tolerance of difference. It has also been argued in the interviews and the existing documents that matches/mismatches between learners and teachers should be tolerated; cultural differences should be both valued and tolerated. Learners with different cultural values and perceptions should be involved in decision making about components of the curriculum.

In line with the second research question, the following model was proposed as a PC model for English language teaching in the Iranian high schools (Figure 1):

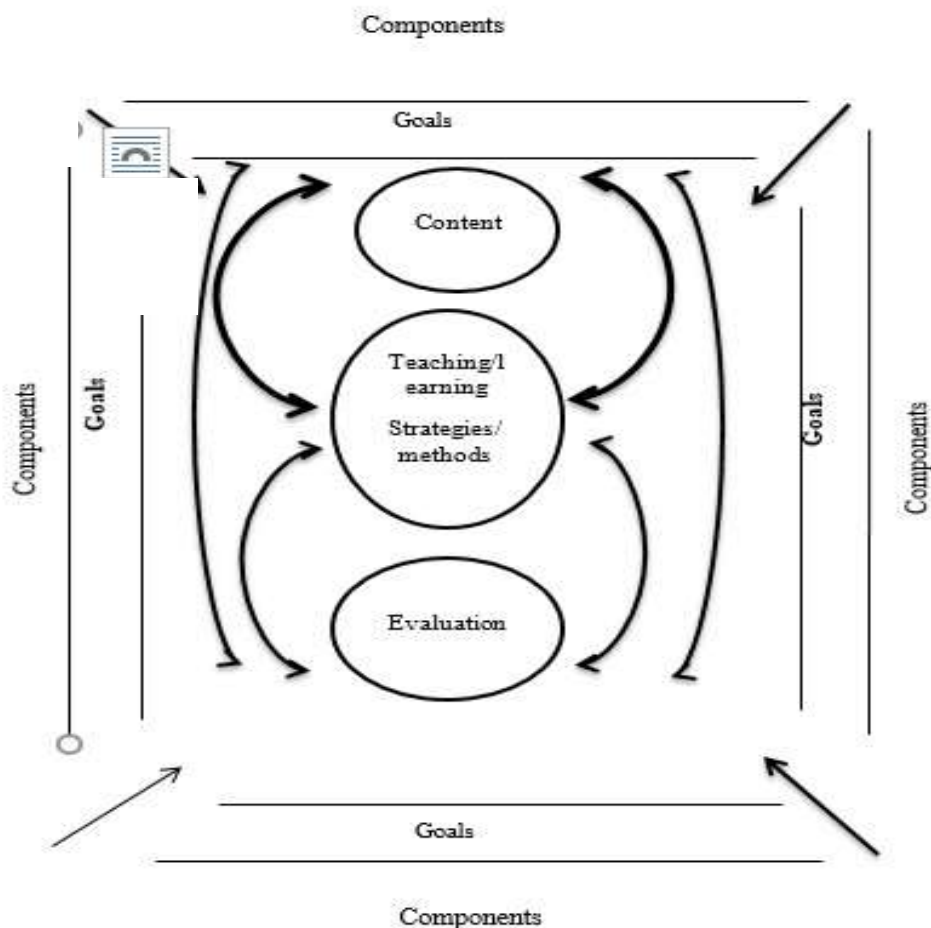


Figure 1. The Proposed Pluralistic Curriculum (PC) Model for ELT in the Iranian High Schools

As seen in Figure 1, the proposed PC model consists of four elements, namely goals, content, teaching/learning strategies/methods and evaluation. These elements are elaborated in the Table 1 as follows:

Table 1

Explanations of the Elements of the Proposed PC Model

Elements of the proposed PC model	Explanations of the elements of the proposed PC model
Goals	<p>To change the structure of educational institutions so that male and female students, exceptional students, and students who are members of diverse, racial, ethnic and cultural groups have an equal chance to make academic progress at school.</p> <p>To promote balance, equity, and social justice; and reduce marginalization.</p> <p>To enhance students' cross-cultural awareness, to extend students' understandings of the complexity of the society today and to prepare them to live in a democratic society.</p> <p>To equip students with the necessary knowledge, attitude and skills to live efficiently in a multicultural society, to prepare them to work and succeed in a world of diversity, to help students develop skills in ethnic knowledge comprehension, reflective self-analysis, clarification of racial attitudes and values, comparative analyses of ethnic and cultural phenomena and elimination of ethnic isolation.</p> <p>To develop ethnic and racial knowledge in the students through reflecting ethnic, environmental, religious, cultural and linguistic diversity and showing ideals, expectations, histories and heroes of different cultures and societies in the curriculum.</p> <p>To enhance students' creative and critical thinking.</p>
Content	<p>The content should have the potential of producing fundamental changes in the total school climate.</p> <p>The content should reflect voices of different cultures, classes, races and ethnicities without humiliating a specific culture, class, race or ethnicity.</p> <p>The content should reflect different English and Persian accents and dialects.</p> <p>The content should reflect linguistic, religious, environmental and ethnic diversity.</p> <p>The content should reflect English and Persian cultural differences and similarities.</p> <p>The content should leave a place for learners' expression of their distinct cultural identity in both Persian and English, for instance, in the form of open questions in reading comprehension questions.</p> <p>The content should cover English and Persian proverbs and idioms and similarities and differences of their appropriate context.</p> <p>The content should allow for autobiography writing in English, because it allows students to assume ownership of English.</p> <p>The content should introduce great English and Persian events, models and heroes.</p> <p>The content should reflect history, arts, culture, traditions, costumes, norms, and values of both minority and majority groups.</p> <p>The content should include proverbs, poems, narratives, and images showing different ethnicities.</p>

Table 1 (Continued)

	<p>The content should reflect different successful cultural, racial, and ethnic models.</p> <p>The content should encourage knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school and social culture.</p> <p>The content should address the different dimensions of the lives of ethnic group members, both minority and majority groups.</p> <p>The content should help students develop openness and open-mindedness and avoid narrow-mindedness.</p> <p>The content should prepare students to encounter future unpredictable challenging situations.</p> <p>The content should include both subject conceptual and procedural knowledge. Conceptual and procedural knowledge (as identified in the learning outcomes in the programs of study) provide the subject content and context for the development of competencies, and literacy and numeracy. Through developing and applying literacy, and competencies, students acquire understanding that facilitates meaningful connections across and within subjects. Students then apply their knowledge to new situations, improve upon ideas, solve problems and make decisions.</p>
Teaching/learning strategies/methods	<p>Teaching methods/strategies should be diverse, they should not constrain students to some common mainstream learning opportunities, but they should leave the room for creativity, criticality and individuality.</p> <p>Teaching methods/strategies should be participatory and cooperative, incorporating the views of the students of different cultures, races, ethnicities and social classes.</p> <p>Teaching methods/strategies should be based on negotiation, discussion and dialogue (with students and colleagues), using exploratory teaching methods/strategies which are built on direct and active involvement of the students with the learning problems.</p>
Evaluation	<p>Lack of emphasis on purely quantitative evaluation and standardized tests; and simultaneous use of quantitative (e.g., standardized tests) and qualitative (e.g., observation, interview, and autobiography) evaluation methods.</p> <p>The evaluation should not be just limited to pen and pencil tests or qualitative data, but it should enjoy dynamicity and flexibility.</p> <p>Using participatory evaluation methods wherein the room is left for the participation of all the stakeholders in the process of evaluation. The new models of evaluation follow principles of shared power, collaboration and representation, and can therefore be viewed as more democratic.</p> <p>Evaluation methods should consider the principle of considering the voices of diverse groups in multicultural societies. Given that most nations in the world today consist of groups that define themselves as 'different' along a number of dimensions such as culture, language, religion, sexuality, gender, ideology, economics and politics, differences between these groups should be recognized in the evaluation methods. More specifically, immigrants and indigenous groups should not be expected to conform and assimilate to the dominant majority and to assume its values and ideologies.</p> <p>Using diverse evaluations of students' learning: self-evaluations and mutual evaluations in order to measure the students' achievement of the learning objectives; both performance-based tests of the learning process and summative tests of their learning outcomes; surveys and interviews for students and people.</p>

In explaining the model, as illustrated in Figure 1, the components should be transformed into goals. Because the goals are usually more comprehensive and influence and direct the other elements, they have been put into bigger open rectangles. As depicted in the Figure, the arrows from the components (and sub-components) to the goals and to the remaining elements of the model are one-way. These one-way arrows show that from the components (and sub-components); we reach to the goals and from the goals to the remaining elements in a one-way manner. As shown in the Figure, the other three elements of the model (content, teaching/learning strategies/methods, and evaluation) have been placed in closed circles connected to each other. They are closed in the sense that they work within the boundary of the goals, and cannot go beyond them. In other words, the goals determine the content, teaching/learning strategies/methods, and evaluation. However, as shown in the model, the content, teaching/learning strategies/methods and evaluation are connected to each other by two-way arrows. That is, the content determines teaching/learning strategies/methods and evaluation method(s) and is determined by them. Teaching/learning strategies/methods influence the content and evaluation and are influenced by them. Evaluation determines the content and teaching/learning strategies/methods and is determined by them. This depicts a dynamic and dialectic model, rather than a linear one, wherein the elements of content, teaching and evaluation influence and are influenced by each other.

The third research question aimed at validating the PC model developed. To this aim, the internal consistency of the questionnaire developed based on the PC model was checked through running Cronbach's test. The construct validity of the questionnaire was also checked through confirmatory factor analysis. Results are presented in the following table:

Table 2

Internal Consistency of the Elements of the Model

Element	Alpha
Goals	0.82
Content	0.85
Teaching methods	0.87
Evaluation	0.78

As shown in the above table, the internal consistency of all four elements of the model exceeded 0.80. Therefore, it could be argued that the developed instrument enjoyed an acceptable internal consistency.

Results of factor analysis including results of KMO and Bartlett's Test, Initial Eigenvalues of the elements, Screen plot and Element matrix are presented in the following tables and graph.

Table 3

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.92
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	7298.534
	Df	260
	Sig	.001

As shown in Table 3, KMO value is 0.92 which means that the sample is adequate for factor analysis.

Table 4

Eigenvalues and Variances Explained by Each Element

Element	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9.364	31	31	9.364	31	31
2	8.237	25	25	8.237	25	56
3	5.487	17	17	5.487	17	73
4	4.1	10	10	4.1	10	83

As shown in the above table, four elements were extracted which explained 83 percent of the variances. The initial Eigenvalue of the first element is 9.36, and it explains 31 % of the variance. The initial Eigenvalue of the second element is 8.23, and it explains 25 % of the variance. Moreover, initial Eigenvalue of the third element is 5.48, and it explains 17 % of the variance and initial Eigenvalue of the fourth element is 4.1, and it explains 10 % of the variance. To have a visual representation of the extracted elements, the following Figure is presented.

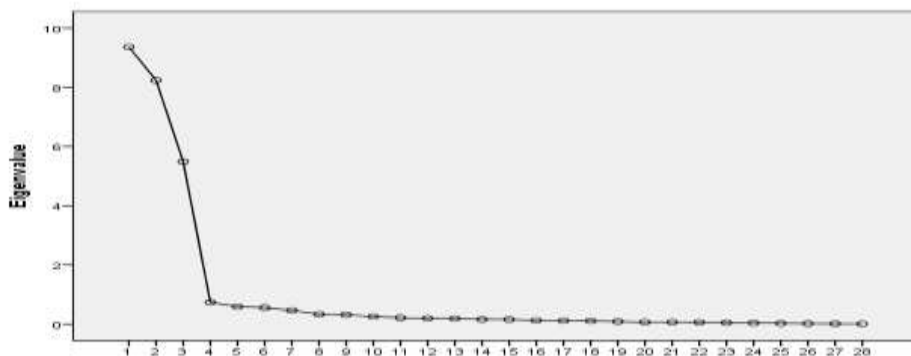


Figure 2. Screen Plot of the Extracted Elements

As it is shown in the above Figure, the 40 items submitted to exploratory factor analysis were reduced to only four elements with Eigenvalues of 1 and above. The loading factors of the items belonging to each element exceeded 0.47. Therefore, all items were kept. In sum, based on the results of rotation matrix and loading factors of all items, it can be strongly argued that the developed proposed model for EFL curriculum at Iranian high schools has a very acceptable construct validity.

5. Conclusion and Implications

Results of data analysis revealed the following components for PC: pluralistic education, pluralistic evaluation, racial and ethnic equality, social class equality, linguistic diversity and equality, gender equality, cultural diversity and tolerance of difference. The identified components have been more or less emphasized in the previous studies on pluralism, pluralistic education, and related notions such as multiculturalism, multicultural education, etc. (e.g., Abdeli Soltan Ahmadi & Sadeghi, 2016; Colombo, 2013; Daryai-Hansen et al., 2015; Mostafazadeh et al., 2015; Sadeghi, 2010, 2012).

The first component of the PC model was pluralistic education. This finding is consistent with several related studies (Colombo, 2013; Honnett, 1992; Taylor, 1992) who believed that in a deep sense pluralism has to a great extent to do with the highest function assigned to education. Therefore, based on the findings of the study, it can be postulated that pluralistic education is not limited to teaching literacy skills to the students. It deals with social, economic, political, and cultural issues. Pluralistic education should therefore go beyond the traditional borders of education and link society, economics, ethics, ethnicity, gender, and whatever might affect present and future life of the students with teaching and evaluation methods and strategies.

The findings are consistent with Mostafazadeh, et al. (2015) who conducted a qualitative study to identify the main components of a multicultural education. The results of their study revealed that pluralistic curriculum consists of different components: anti-racism education, acceptance of diversity and plurality, peaceful coexistence, educational justice, flexibility in educational programs, variety of evaluation methods, training of human capacities, strengthening of respect for the differences, protecting the minority languages, and strengthening multi-cultural and inter-cultural communication

Gender equality is another component of pluralistic curriculum. That is, it is assumed that in pluralistic education both male and female students are equal and there is no gender discrimination. The findings are consistent with the results of the study undertaken by Aikman and Unterhalter (2007)

who understand that the equality of genders in education entails both girls' and boys' freedom to attend school, "to learn and participate in a safe nondiscriminatory space, to develop gender-sensitive and democratic values, and to enjoy a range of economic, political, and cultural opportunities and valued outcomes (p.4)". Likewise, the UNESCO states that gender education equality is completely reached when boys and girls have the same opportunities to attend schools, with a curricula and teaching method "free of stereotypes, enjoy counseling free of gender discrimination, equality of outcomes, learning achievement and academic qualifications, and overall equal job opportunities based on having the same conditions for similar qualifications and experience, regardless of the gender (2003, p. 5).

The findings of the study are also consistent with Gollnick and Chinn (2002) who argue that while teachers should look for ways to acculturate the students in their classes, they also need to be understanding and responsive to students' own cultures. As stated by Gollnick and Chinn (2002), a great number of students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds populate modern language classrooms today and "efforts mount to identify effective methods to teach these students" while "the need for pedagogical approaches that are culturally responsive intensifies" (p. 21).

Regarding gender equality in education, in line with the findings of the related studies (e.g., Aikmann & Unterhalter 2007; Wilson, 2003), it can be argued that gender equity in education is perceived as a necessary but insufficient precondition for achieving the more complex gender equality. Subrahmanian (2005) and Unterhalter (2007) emphasize that gender equality is a first step towards gender equality in education (UNESCO, 2010). The authors appoint to the necessity to also focus on the equality of education and its impact on the overall girls' and women's everyday lives (Aikamn & Unterhalter, 2007; Herz & Sperling, 2004; Subrahmanian 2005; UNESCO, 2010; USAID, 2008; Wilson, 2003). This involves an education which promotes equal roles, treatment and opportunities for girls and boys, within and through it. To reach this gender-sensitive quality education, aspects such as the curricula, the learning content, methods and materials, as well as the school environment and the educational system' governance need to be free from gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices (UNESCO, 2010)

Regarding the findings related to linguistic diversity, as Giselbrecht (2009) argues, it could be argued that pluralistic approaches to cultures and languages are democratic concepts which acknowledge and appreciate the right to diversity of all cultural and linguistic varieties. To simply put, pluralistic concepts support tolerance and understanding towards the attitudes of openness, cultures, social structures, and values of other communities and argue in favor of cultural and linguistic diversity in society. In education the context, pluralistic ideas can be practically used by developing global view of

learning and teaching of culture and language. The findings also confirm arguments proposed by Candelier et al. (2007, p. 8, as cited in Giselbrecht, 2009) that diversity of culture and language includes “the teaching and learning of ALL languages [and cultures], in order to profit from their potential for synergy”.

The outcome of this academic effort was a PC model for English language teaching at the Iranian high schools. Results showed that the developed model consisted of four elements: goals, contents, teaching methods and evaluation methods. The detailed analysis of the elements of the proposed model shows that experts believe that EFL curriculum should aim at changing the structure of educational settings, establishing balance, equity, and social justice, enhancing students’ cross-cultural awareness of the complexity of the society, equipping students with the necessary knowledge to live in a multicultural society, improving and developing democratic attitudes and values, removing cultural, ethnic and racial domination, developing ethnic and racial knowledge in the students, providing educational opportunities for cultural, ethnic, and linguistic minorities, and enhance students’ creativity and critical thinking. This finding is consistent with findings of several studies on pluralistic education (e.g., Adams, 2004; Aikmann & Unterhalter, 2007; Gollnick & Chinn, 2002; Subrahmanian, 2005; Wilson, 2003).

In line with the developed model, it can be argued that if the structure of educational institutions becomes pluralistic, equal chances will be provided to male and female students, exceptional students, and students who are members of diverse, racial, ethnic and cultural groups to achieve academically in school (Mohammadi, Kamal Kharazi, Kazemifard, & Pourkarim, 2016). Moreover, balance, equity, and social justice will be promoted, marginalization will be reduced; cultural, ethnic and racial domination will be removed by taking different interests of different cultures, ethnicities and races into consideration (Barnett & Napoli, 2008, as cited in Mohammadi et al., 2016). Furthermore, students’ creative and critical thinking (Motamed, Yarmohammadian, & Yusefy, 2014) and their ethnic and racial knowledge can be developed through reflecting ethnic, environmental, religious, cultural and linguistic diversity and showing ideals, expectations, histories and heroes of different cultures and societies in the curriculum (Sadeghi, 2012).

Moreover, as a result of implementing the proposed PC model, the curriculum content can produce fundamental changes in the total school climate through reflecting voices of different cultures, classes, races and ethnicities without humiliating a specific culture, class, race or ethnicity, different accents and dialects, and linguistic, religious, environmental and ethnic diversity (Bic Ngo, 2010, as cited in Abdeli Soltan Ahmadi &

Sadeghi, 2016). To this aim, the curriculum content should cover English and Persian proverbs and idioms and similarities and differences of their appropriate context; it should allow for autobiography writing in English, because it allows students to assume ownership of English; it should help students develop openness and open-mindedness and avoid narrow-mindedness; it should prepare students to encounter future unpredictable challenging situations, etc. (Abdeli Soltan Ahmadi & Sadeghi, 2016).

Furthermore, in line with the proposed PC model, teaching methods/strategies should be diverse, they should not constrain students to some common mainstream learning opportunities, but they should leave the room for creativity, criticality and individuality; they should be participatory and cooperative, incorporating the views of the students of different cultures, races, ethnicities and social classes; and they should be based on negotiation, discussion and dialogue (with students and colleagues), using exploratory teaching methods/strategies which are built on direct and active involvement of the students with the learning problems.

Last but not least, in evaluation, purely quantitative evaluation and standardized tests should not be emphasized, but quantitative (e.g., standardized tests) and qualitative (e.g., observation, interview, and autobiography) evaluation methods should be simultaneously used. The evaluation should not be just limited to pen and pencil tests or qualitative data, but it should enjoy dynamicity and flexibility. Participatory evaluation methods should be used wherein the room is left for the participation of all the stakeholders in the process of evaluation. Evaluation methods should consider the principle of considering the voices of diverse groups in multicultural societies.

This study also aimed at validating the proposed model for pluralistic EFL curriculum. Results showed that the proposed model enjoyed an acceptable internal consistency. Results also showed that the 40 items were reduced into four factors. The four factors explained about 84.75% of the variance of the variable. Based on the amount of variances explained by the elements, it can be strongly argued that the developed model has acceptable construct validity. Results also show that all items suggested by the experts were confirmed by statistical analysis and none of the suggested items were removed. The loading factors of all the items of each element indicate that the items of each element are highly correlated with each other emphasizing that they all measure one construct.

In line with the findings of the study, it could be strongly argued that Iranian experts believe in the application of principles of pluralistic curriculum at four levels of goals, contents, teaching methods, and evaluation in teaching English as a foreign language to high school students. Furthermore, the proposed model, because of its reliability and validity, can

be used as a valid scale to see whether educational curriculums most particularly EFL/ESL curriculums at different levels (primary, junior high school, high school, and tertiary education) are developed in line with pluralistic curriculum or not.

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