

Research paper

## English-Persian dualism: Exploring Gained Insights after the Islamic Education Course in MA Programs among Iranian English Language Professors

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### **Abstract**

This study explores English-Persian dualism by examining insights gained from the Islamic Education Course in MA programs among Iranian English language professors. Using purposive sampling, 19 professors from public and private universities in Sabzevar were selected. Data collection involved two main methods: a structured literature review followed by a carefully validated and tested questionnaire, and narrative methods to gather deeper insights. The questionnaire was shared via Telegram and WhatsApp in spring 2023. Qualitative content analysis was conducted using MAXQDA, following an eight-step procedure. During open coding, 80 initial codes were identified from the interview data. After refining and merging similar items, 67 core themes were finalized. These themes were grouped into broader categories, each defined based on narrative input. The results indicate that while the Islamic Education Course has been generally effective in shaping professors' perspectives on language and culture, further changes and improvements are necessary for its continued success and deeper impact.

**Keywords:** English-Persian dualism, Insights, Islamic Education Course in MA programs, Iranian English Language Professors.

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## **Introduction**

English is the official foreign language in Iran, introduced to students around age 13. Despite its importance, Iranian officials have long voiced concern about the cultural dominance associated with English. They argue that globalization and westernization through language learning can cause cultural shifts in Iranian society. As a result, ELT textbooks have faced purges (Anonby et al., 2019). The dominance of Western ideologies and the neglect of Islamic values in English education have sparked debates among Muslim TEFL scholars, pushing for a reformed educational system that aligns with Islamic insights (Richards, 2017).

Insight—defined as the ability to reconstruct understanding based on prior knowledge—helps in grasping literature and complex ideas (Fatemi et al., 2018; Ghapanchi & Baradaran, 2011). This study investigates the insights gained from the Islamic Education Course in MA programs among Iranian English professors in the context of English-Persian dualism.

“Dualism” refers to the coexistence of two fundamentally different categories, whether in mind-body philosophy or opposing cultural values (Robinson, 2021). It symbolizes the cultural gap or ethical discontinuity experienced in English language teaching between Western ideologies and Islamic worldviews.

Kumaravadivelu (2016) notes that Islamic and local cultures have long been marginalized by Western norms in ELT. Research shows that Americanized values dominate English teaching materials in Iran, often conflicting with Muslim beliefs (Pishghadam & Zabihi, 2012).

The integration of language and Islamic education marks a significant departure from the Western educational model. English not only transmits language but also Western ideologies, reinforcing cultural dominance (Crystal, 2003). According to Progler (2011), centralized English textbooks often control knowledge dissemination and promote specific worldviews.

While English can foster global understanding, policymakers in religious societies seek to protect traditional values from Western influence. In Iran, this protection takes the form of initiatives like the Islamic Education course in MA TEFL programs.

Previous studies have addressed Islamic education and linguistic challenges separately. However, no research had directly explored the English-Persian dichotomy and insights from the Islamic Education course among Iranian English teachers. This study fills that gap by examining how MA-level Islamic education impacts teacher perspectives on language and cultural duality.

### **Review of literature**

Language and culture are deeply intertwined, making it nearly impossible to master one without engaging with the other. Language serves not only as a tool of communication but also as a medium that expresses, embodies, and symbolizes cultural realities. Thus, understanding the cultural subtleties of a foreign society is difficult without learning its language, and learning the language itself is limited without grasping its cultural context (Abdi, 2019; Kramersch, 2015).

In exploring the structure of such realities, philosophical frameworks like dualism offer useful insights. Dualism typically categorizes existence into two kinds: substance and property. Substance dualism posits the existence of fundamentally different types of substances, such as mind and matter. Property dualism, by contrast, asserts that even if the world is composed of a single kind of substance, there are still two fundamentally different kinds of properties—physical and mental. This form argues that physical science alone cannot fully account for all phenomena, especially those related to consciousness.

A third and increasingly significant category is predicate dualism (Carver & Doellgast, 2021). This perspective holds that while the world may contain only one kind of substance or property,

the language we use to describe mental states (e.g., beliefs, desires, and thoughts) involves predicates that cannot be reduced to physical terms like motion or weight.

### **English-Persian dualism**

English language teaching is a socio-cultural issue in post-revolutionary Iran. Anti-imperialist sentiment led political authorities to view Western influence as harmful. While recognizing English's value for global communication, educationalists advocate limited, localized English to resist Western values. Educational goals and materials reflect resistance to neoliberal education, offering alternatives rooted in national-religious heritage (Babaii, 2019). Policies should align with ideological, political, and social orientations in macro documents (Goodwin Smith, 1904). These include both rational critical ideologies and calls for curricula based on Islamic education values. Religious discourse, rooted in monotheistic naturalism, dominates but differs from Eisner's definition of religious fundamentalism (Meisami, 2022). Policies should preserve learners' national identity in the global village (Jackson, 2018).

### **Islamic Education Course in MA Programs**

The Islamic Education Course emphasizes contemporary educational research, especially social sciences in pedagogy and curriculum. It enables professors to “think educationally” about Islam and analyze Islamic education theory and practice in modern Muslim societies and the West. Students critically review Islamic textbooks and syllabi and explore challenges facing Muslim youth in the diaspora. The course addresses religious extremism and faith development strategies. It fosters dialogue between Western and Islamic educational approaches, helping educators become reflective practitioners.

The purpose of this study was to respond to the following three research questions:

Q1. What effect does English-Persian language duality have on English language teaching pillars after the researcher's self-experience in a four-month period with Islamic Education course during his MA programs?

Q2. After the Islamic Education course in MA programs, what attitudes do Iranian English language professors have toward the English language status in the country?

### **Method**

This study employed a phenomenological research design, which aims to describe lived experiences and subjective perceptions rather than causal mechanisms. It explores how phenomena appear to individuals, based on their interpretations and experiences. Prior to conducting the study, existing theories and prior research were reviewed, affirming the study's theoretical orientation. Specifically, this research examined challenges related to English-Persian dualism and sought to understand how Iranian English professors perceive the recent Islamization of the TEFL MA curriculum. The phenomenological method allowed the researchers to gather in-depth narrative accounts from participants and understand the meanings they assign to this curricular change.

### **Participants**

Nineteen male and female English language professors from Sabzevar universities, both public and private, were selected as primary participants. These individuals had taught in MA programs after completing the newly introduced Islamic Education Course. Additional teachers'

insights were included to compensate for a limited number of interviews with professors and to enhance the study's comprehensiveness.

Participants were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure diversity in gender, institutional affiliation, and professional background. Additionally, a criterion-based selection strategy was employed to target individuals who met specific qualifications relevant to the research objectives. Criterion sampling enables researchers to focus on participants who are most likely to contribute meaningful insights to the study's core questions. While this method promotes depth and relevance, it may introduce bias if criteria are poorly defined or exclude valuable perspectives (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993). Given the context-bound nature of qualitative research, careful participant selection is essential to generate clear and structured findings.

### **Data collection procedures**

The study proceeded in two primary phases:

a) Identifying English language professors, and b) Ensuring their completion of Islamic sciences courses. Participants completed questionnaires distributed via email and WhatsApp. Ultimately, nineteen teachers were selected based on established criteria.

Two main data collection methods were used:

A) Structured Records Review: The researcher began with a comprehensive review of published literature and manuscripts. Based on this review, a questionnaire was developed. This instrument underwent validity audits, expert reviews, member checks, and a pilot test before distribution via Telegram and WhatsApp groups linked to participants in spring 2023.

B) Narrative Analysis: The researchers collected narrative accounts from participants reflecting on their experiences with the Islamic education course. Ten participants were also interviewed face-to-face.

### Data Analysis

The method of data analysis employed in this study was content analysis, conducted after administering the questionnaire. The goal of content analysis was to systematically examine communicative material, originally focusing on mass media. This material does not have to consist exclusively of texts; it can also include musical, pictorial, plastic, or other similar forms.

## Results

The overall aim of this study was to explore the insights gained after the Islamic Education Course in MA programs among Iranian English language professors, specifically regarding English-Persian dualism.

The descriptive findings of the qualitative stage pertain to the characteristics of the participating experts. Due to the non-disclosure of their names, only their abbreviations have been provided.

**Table 1:**  
*Demographic Characteristics of Expert*

Number	Names	Gender	Age	Education	Job	Organization
1	Marjan.V	F	45	Ph.D	Professor	IAU
2	Zahra.H	F	45	Ph.D	Professor	IAU
3	Elnaz.K	F	25	M.A	Teacher	Institutes
4	Parvin.S	F	29	M.A	Teacher	M.O.E
5	Hamed.M	M	29	M.A	Teacher	M.O.E
6	Ali.R	M	45	Ph.D	Professor	P.U
7	Hosna.H	F	70	Ph.D	Professor	P.U
8	Eli.A	F	50	Ph.D	Professor	P.U

9	Mina.S	F	50	Ph.D	Professor	P.U
10	Mona.D	F	48	Ph.D	Professor	P.U
11	Saeed.H	M	47	M.A	Teacher	Institutes
12	Sara.Y	F	42	M.A	Teacher	P.U
13	Mehdi.H	M	48	Ph.D	Professor	P.U
14	Hoda.H	F	40	M.A	Teacher	P.U
15	Omid.J	M	50	Ph.D	Professor	P.U
16	Hossein.A	M	60	Ph.D	Professor	IAU
17	Sina.S	M	50	Ph.D	Professor	P.U
18	Neda.B	F	45	Ph.D	Professor	P.U
19	Javad.N	M	29	M.A	Teacher	M.O.E

### **Coding of Basic Themes**

In the first stage, qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews with research participants, specifically professors and teachers who participated in the Islamic education course as MA students. During the open coding process to identify primary themes, numerous themes emerged. Through an iterative process of data analysis, the initial set of themes was refined into fewer categories.

Primary codes were extracted from the interview texts, resulting in a total of 80 initial codes. After merging similar codes, this number was reduced to 67 core categories. Some samples of the extracted codes are presented in the following as in table 2:

**Table 2:**  
***Coding Process of Basic Themes, Source: Authors***

<b>Propositions</b>	<b>Basic Themes</b>
<b>Interviewee number 1</b>	
It seems that English teachers are trying their best to convey their feelings and thoughts through English, but they are not succeeding.	Failure to communicate thoughts and feelings
<b>Interviewee number 2</b>	
Pure educational content, such as reviewing the history and theories of language teaching methods, is not a criterion for the difference in thinking, feeling and desire.	The unimportance of thoughts and feelings in fundamental topics and theories

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If it is cultural and ideological, there is a place of incompatibility

Thoughts and feelings in cultural and ideological issues

**Interviewee number 3**

While teaching, I often used Persian and Arabic alongside English to explain Quranic verses and theological reasoning. English lacked the depth to convey religious and philosophical concepts with emotional and conceptual clarity, so Persian helped better articulate essential ideas about divine wisdom and belief in God

Failure to guide students' thoughts

**Interviewee number 4**

I think communication and understanding are different in the minds of bilingual people. Therefore, it is possible for a person to have feelings for a word in Farsi, but not for the same word in English, so I think my answer is no.

Not the same understanding of concepts in different languages

**Interviewee number 5**

very little. Most people are dissatisfied with the existence of religious education programs in their study units and believe that learning them is not useful in developing their expertise.

Uselessness of the course from the perspective of students

**Interviewee number 6**

In most cases, it has a good command.

The importance of the teacher's mastery of the topics

Because of cultural content and learning another language means to learn anything from others for example: culture, beliefs, behavior and in M.A., we are researchers, not religious researchers.

The difference between a language teacher and a religious missionary

**Interviewee number 7**

Two languages means dealing with two different cultures and religious concepts.

The difference between languages as the difference between cultures and concepts  
Being related more closely Farsi to Arabic than English

Therefore, I think using Farsi and Arabic instead of English seems a more compatible option.

**Interviewee number 8**

Some aspects of their meaning may be lost when they try to convey the message through language, especially when it comes to abstract concepts, such as religious concepts.

Difficulty conveying abstract concepts

**Interviewee number 9**

I think most of the time yes, but you can't always talk about your real opinions in class as a professor or student because

Various limiting considerations

you have to consider religious, political, cultural and personal differences and use sensitive topics.

So I can be careful about what I want to say in the classroom

The need for the teachers to be cautious in expressing some concepts

**Interviewee number 10**

Language as a carrier of culture and identity may have a different effect on the expression of ideas in Farsi and English.

Some professors may find value in integrating religious concepts in their teaching practice and see it as an opportunity to enrich their understanding of Islamic culture and its impact on language and education.

Language connection with ideas and identity

The course as an opportunity for reflection and further study

**Coding of Organizer Themes Along with Their Basic Themes**

According to Table 2, which illustrates the coding process of the basic themes, these themes have been categorized into organizing themes based on commonalities and conceptual affinities. A discussion and analysis of these themes has been conducted. Therefore, in the following sections, six categories of organizing themes, along with their corresponding basic themes, will be presented, discussed, and analysed.

**First Organizer Theme: Obstacles and Reasons for Failure**

In Table 3 you can see the theme of the first organized along with its basic themes.

**Table 3**

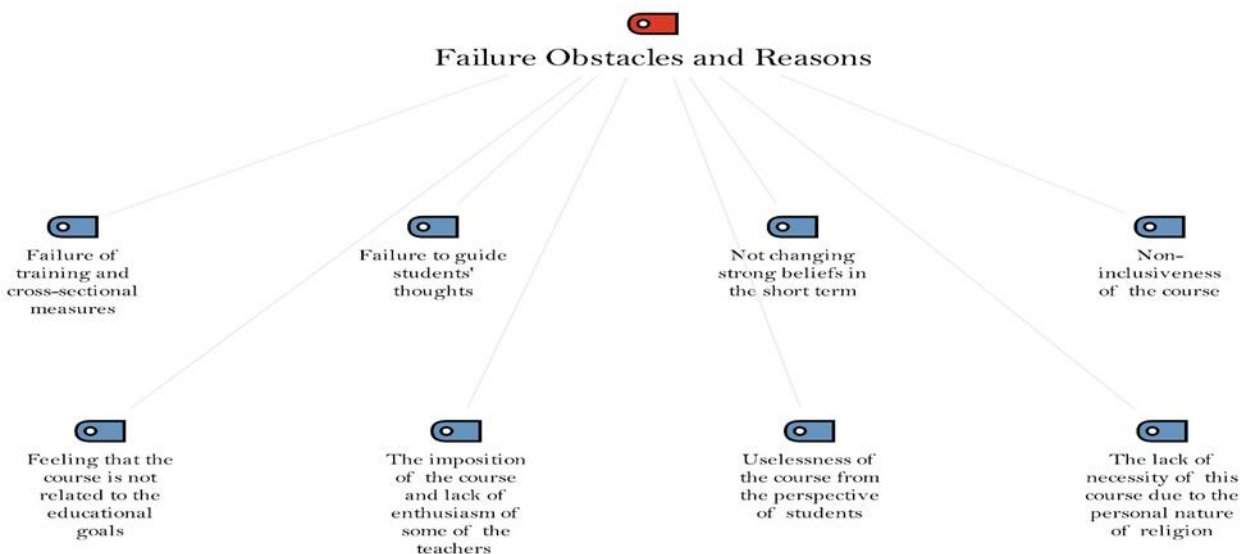
*The Theme of the First Organizer Along with Its Basic Themes A*

<b>Organizer Theme</b>	<b>Basic Themes</b>
Feeling that the course is not related to the educational goals	A. Failure
A2. The imposition of the course and lack of enthusiasm of some of the teachers (it was repeated twice)	Obstacles and Reasons, A1.
A3. Uselessness of the course from the perspective of students	
A4. The lack of necessity of this course due to the personal nature of religion	
A5. Failure of training and cross-sectional measures	
A6. Failure to guide students' thoughts	
A7. Not changing strong beliefs in the short term	
A8. Non-inclusiveness of the course	

This study examines changes in attitudes toward English learning before and after taking the Islamic education course. The first theme focuses on obstacles that have hindered the course's effectiveness. Interviewees noted that the course often feels imposed and misaligned with educational goals, which reduces teachers' motivation to engage. One interviewee emphasized that the course's success depends on individual beliefs, teacher engagement, and how well it aligns with educational aims (Interviewee 12).

Students, the course's primary audience, also find it ineffective and lacking in depth, with few universities actively promoting or offering it. According to another participant, most students feel that religious education courses add little value to their academic or professional development (Interviewee 6).

Additionally, several interviewees argued that religious belief is deeply personal and not easily influenced by institutional efforts. They expressed skepticism that such short-term courses could meaningfully redirect students' thinking or shift their core beliefs. The theme of the first organizer and its basic themes can be seen in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Failure obstacles and reasons**

**The second organizing theme: Rethinking the Role and Effects of Language Teachers**

In Table 4 you can see the theme of the second organizer along with its basic themes.

**Table 4:**

***The theme of the first organizer along with its basic themes B***

<b>Organizing Themes</b>	<b>Basic Themes</b>
B1. The difference between an English teacher and a religious missionary	B. Rethinking the Role and Effects of Language Teachers
B2. The importance of honesty in speech and behavior of teachers	
B3. Improving the knowledge of teachers in the field of Islamic concepts and Islamic lifestyle	
B4. The effects of teacher's own beliefs on teaching quality	
B5. The importance of the teacher's mastery of the topics	
B6. The need for the teacher to be cautious in expressing some concepts	
B7. The effect of teacher enthusiasm on teaching quality	

The interviews reveal a reconsideration of the English teacher's role following the Islamic education course. Many participants believe the course enhances teachers' understanding of Islamic concepts and lifestyle. Yet, some critically argue that English teachers are language specialists, not religious missionaries, and should not be expected to take on that role.

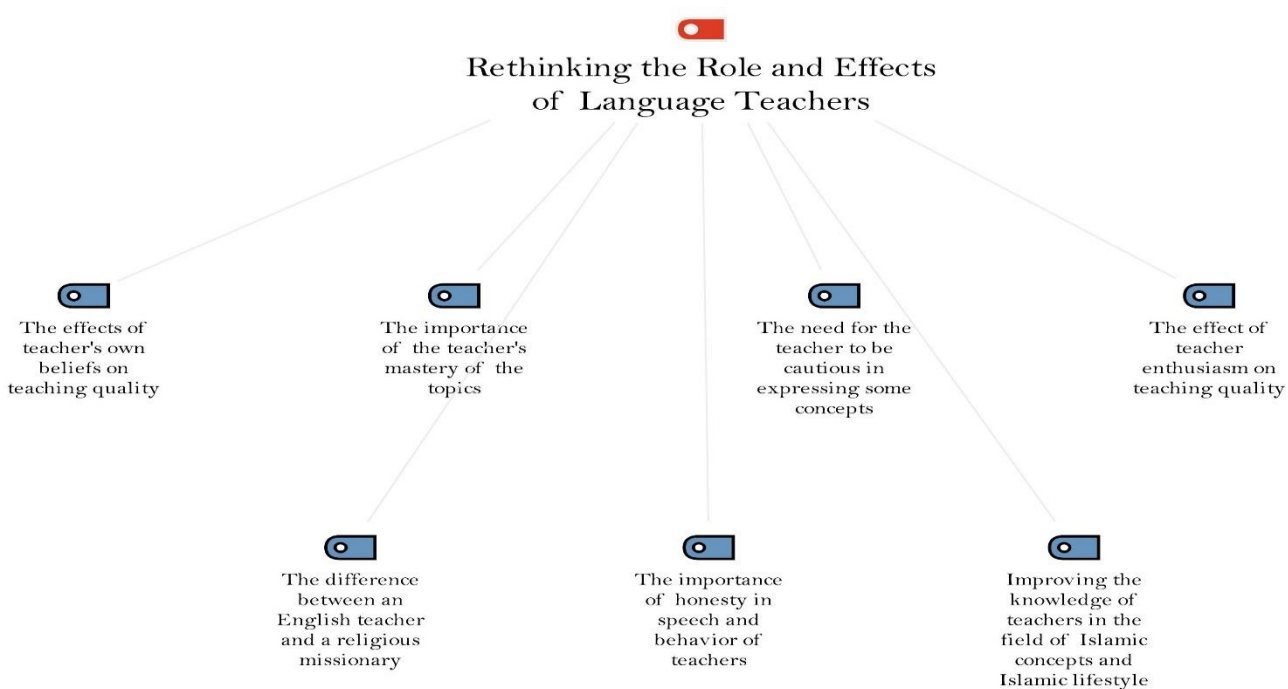
One interviewee noted that while Persian might better convey certain ideological points, the core issue is that teachers, from an Islamic perspective, must be knowledgeable and well-rounded. They advocated for specialized training in Islamic teachings, especially since many English instructors, particularly in universities, lack familiarity with even basic practices like prayer and fasting (Interviewee 3).

The interviews also highlighted that a teacher's beliefs influence both instructional quality and classroom atmosphere. Enthusiasm for teaching Islamic-informed content can encourage student engagement. One teacher mentioned acting as a coach or role model, suggesting that

personal integrity and thoughtful discussion of religious principles make the course more meaningful—even without deep religious expertise (Interviewee 3).

However, some concerns remain. Teachers need comprehensive command over religious and linguistic content, which cannot be gained through a brief course alone. Moreover, because religious subjects are inherently sensitive, English teachers must address them thoughtfully and with appropriate sensitivity.

Therefore, the theme of the second organizer and its basic themes can be seen in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Rethinking the Role and Effects of Language Teachers**

### **Third Organizing Theme: Rethinking the Role of Students**

In Table 5, you can see the theme of the third organizer along with its basic themes.

**Table 5**

***The Theme of the First Organizer Along with Its Basic Themes C***

Basic Themes	Organizer Theme
C. Rethinking the Role of Students	C1. Insufficient teaching of Islamic concepts during education C2. The course as an opportunity for reflection and further study C3. Master course as an opportunity to transfer religious concepts C4. The effect of the course depends on the students' beliefs C5. The importance and impact of the course in changing students' attitudes C6. The importance of religious background in the quality of the course C7. The need to pay attention to cultural and individual differences

Although the Islamic Education Course is aimed at English language teachers, interviewees emphasize that English students are indirect yet significant recipients of its impact. Many believe that Islamic teachings during earlier academic stages were insufficient, making it difficult to effectively convey such concepts in the short time available at the master's level. This lack of prior exposure poses a challenge for transferring Islamic ideas cross-sectionally.

However, some see an opportunity in the reduced number of master's-level units. They argue that fewer academic demands allow for more focus on religious education. One interviewee highlighted the master's course as an ideal setting for introducing religious concepts, given students' academic maturity and available time (Interviewee 2).

The course success is also seen as closely tied to students' personal beliefs and religious backgrounds. Its effectiveness increases when it brings about shifts in student perspectives, particularly regarding critical topics like cultural identity, westernization, and consumerism. One instructor noted positive changes in students' beliefs through classroom discussions addressing these complex themes (Interviewee 3).

Ultimately, teachers must recognize cultural and individual differences among students to prevent potential misunderstandings or resistance. Sensitivity to these factors is crucial for achieving meaningful engagement and avoiding conflict when integrating Islamic teachings.

Therefore, the theme of the third organizer and its basic themes can be seen in Figure 3.

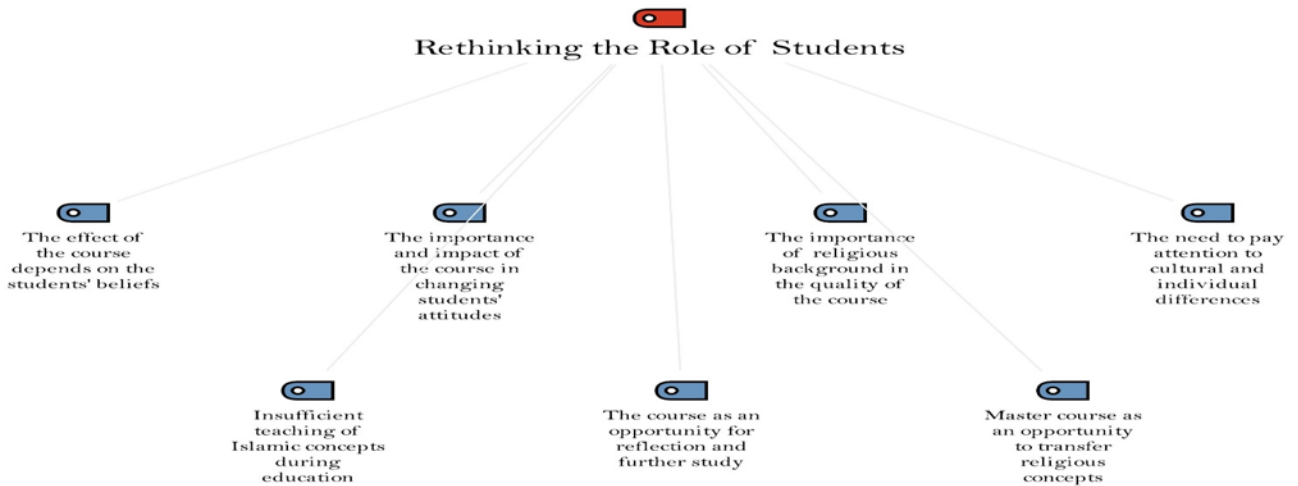


Figure 3: Rethinking the role of students

#### Fourth Organizer Theme: Invisible Borders: Challenges of Transferring Concepts

In Table 6, you can see the theme of the fourth organizer along with its basic themes.

Table 6

#### The Theme of the First Organizer Along with Its Basic Themes D

Basic Themes	Organizer Theme
D. Invisible borders: Challenges of transferring concepts	D1. Not having the same understanding of concepts in different languages
	D2. Difficulty conveying the depth and feeling of concepts 2
	D3. The difficulty of transferring context-oriented concepts 2
	D4. Difficulty conveying abstract concepts
	D5. Being challenging to transfer literary presentations from Persian to English
	D6. The difficulty of conveying sensitive religious topics
	D7. Various limiting considerations
	D8. Limitations caused by social and organizational pressures

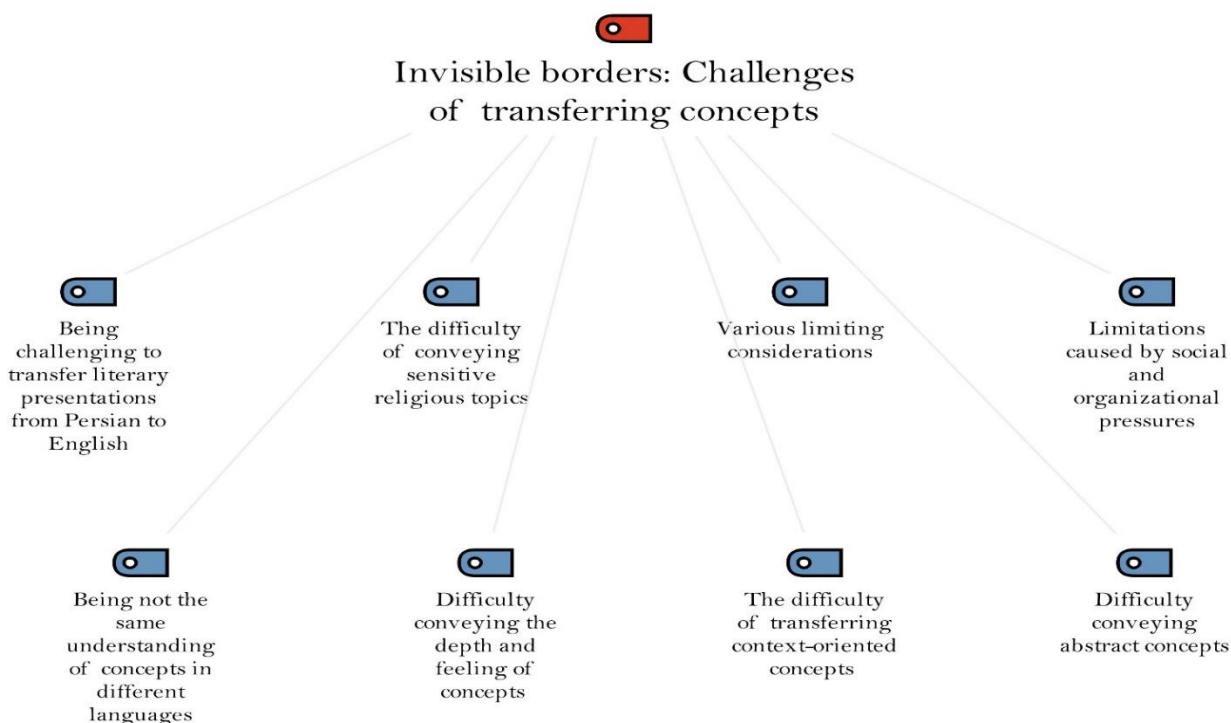
The research findings highlight several intervening factors that challenge the effectiveness of the Islamic Education Course. One major issue is the variation in understanding religious and emotional concepts across languages. As noted by Interviewee 4, bilingual individuals may associate emotions with certain words in Farsi that are not equally understood in English, making it difficult to convey deep, culturally specific meanings in a second language.

Interviewee 3 emphasized that while English can effectively communicate general values such as those in Islamic philosophy, it falls short when addressing localized educational topics. For example, sensitive issues like sexual disparity or homosexuality are difficult to explain in English due to both cultural distance and limited content familiarity. In such cases, using Farsi becomes necessary for clarity and relevance, especially for culturally rooted discussions.

Additionally, abstract concepts—particularly religious or literary expressions—often lose nuance when translated into English. Interviewee 8 noted that language barriers can lead to partial loss of meaning, further complicating instruction.

These challenges are intensified when religious issues intersect with social and organizational constraints. Interviewee 19 pointed out that teachers often must filter or dilute content in both Farsi and English classes due to institutional expectations, limiting their ability to authentically convey religious or cultural perspectives.

Finally, the theme of the fourth organizer and its basic themes can be seen in Figure 4.



**Figure 4: Invisible Borders: Challenges of Transferring Concepts**

**Fifth Organizer Theme: The Intersection of Language, Culture and Concepts**

In Table 7, you can see the theme of the fifth organizer along with its basic themes.

**Table 7:**

*The theme of the first organizer along with its basic themes E*

Basic Themes	Organizer Theme
<b>E. The intersection of language, culture and concepts</b>	E1. Being equivalent the difference in languages to the difference in culture and concepts <sup>2</sup>
	E2. Paying attention to the worldview and philosophy of each language
	E3. The presence of hidden parts in every language
	E4. The importance of research in relation to religious and educational concepts
	E5. Language sharing in the field of emotions
	E6. Language connection with ideas and identity
	E7. The similarity of languages in human principles
	E8. The need to create a connection between the linguistic and cultural world
	E9. The unimportance of thoughts and feelings in fundamental topics and theories
	E10. The importance of thoughts and feelings in cultural and ideological issues
	E11. The need to understand linguistic and cultural differences
	E12. Awareness of the physical origin of the formation process of language learning
	E13. The need to teach philosophical concepts
	E14. Need to practice thinking in English

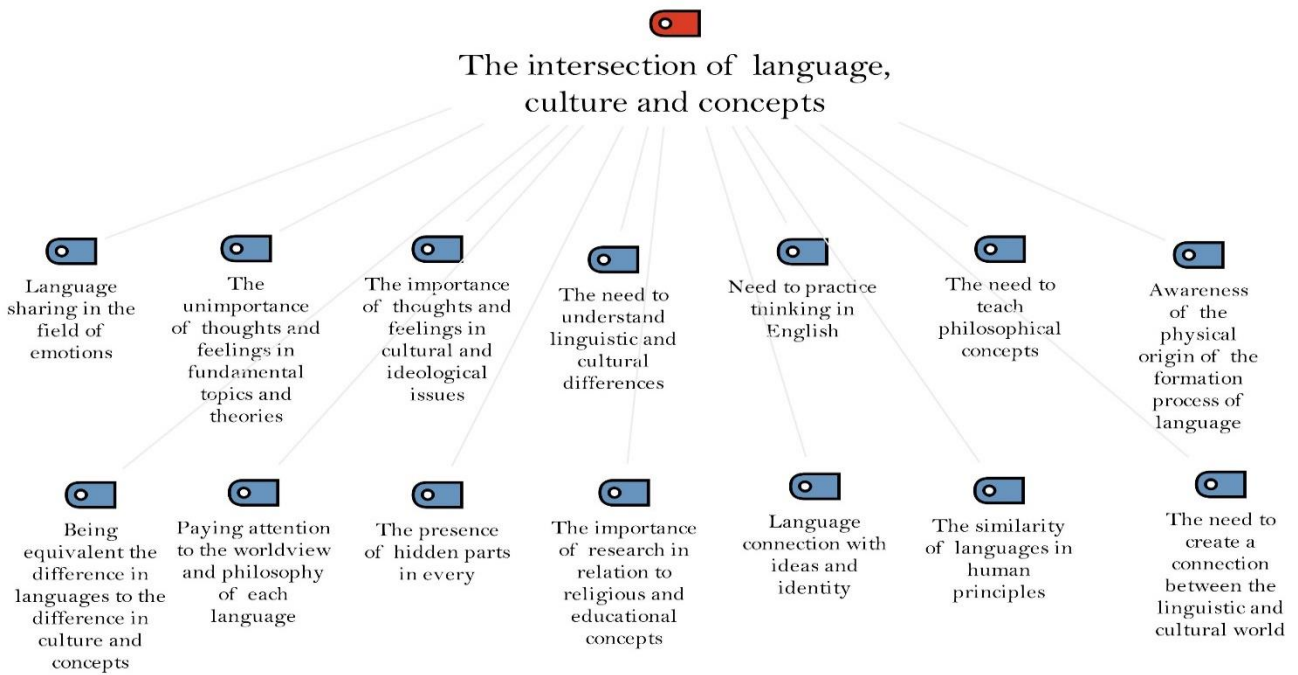
This theme emphasizes that improving the Islamic education course requires attention to language and cultural differences to enhance concept transfer. Interviewees highlighted that languages inherently reflect distinct worldviews and philosophies. Understanding these distinctions is essential when designing lesson content. As Interviewee 1 noted, “Each language has its own philosophy and worldview.”

Interviewees also stressed the complexity of translation, particularly in religious contexts. Language holds hidden cultural and historical layers that are not easily transferred across linguistic boundaries. Interviewee 9 explained that translation may convey denotative meaning but cannot fully transmit deeper cultural nuances.

The main challenges lie not in universal human emotions or abstract principles, but in ideological and identity-based distinctions. Interviewee 10 observed that Persian and English are shaped by unique traditions and histories, influencing their vocabulary and structures. Despite this, all languages reflect a shared human capacity for abstract thinking and symbolic expression, highlighting both diversity and unity in human cognition.

To make the course more effective, teachers must first be equipped with knowledge about language philosophy and learning foundations. Only then can they effectively convey religious and Islamic concepts, bridging linguistic and cultural divides and fostering meaningful cross-cultural understanding in the classroom.

Finally, the theme of the fifth organizer and its basic themes can be seen in the figure.



**Figure 5: The intersection of language, culture and concepts**

**Sixth Organizer Theme: Technical and Technological Redefinition of the Course**

In Table 8, you can see the theme of the sixth organizer along with its basic themes

**Table 8**

***The Theme of the First Organizer Along with Its Basic Themes F***

Basic Themes	Organizer Theme
<b>F. Technical and technological redefinition of the course</b>	F1. The need to review the existing resources 2
	F2. The importance of revising the content and method of the course
	F3. Preparation of books and related resources
	F4. The importance of knowing the audience of the training
	F5. The need for the courses to be targeted
	F6. Being the mother tongue as the best language to understand concepts 2
	F7. The importance of transferring poems and concepts to Persian language
	F8. Using different languages to convey concepts in a complementary way 3
	F9. The common origin of the language in the principles, but the difference in the transfer methods 4
	F10. Being related Farsi more closely to Arabic than English
	F11. The need to explain Islamic concepts in English for better advertising
	F12. Identifying and using the capacities of each language

The sixth theme emphasizes improvements to the course in both technical and content areas. Interviewees suggest that current resources are outdated, addressing past concerns rather than present-day issues. They stress the need for content revision, arguing that today's students require engagement with contemporary religious questions. Furthermore, they highlight the inappropriateness of borrowing resources from different Islamic societies with distinct cultural contexts (Interviewee 14).

Interviewees recommend the development of new, specialized materials, including books and pamphlets. Current reliance on scattered Persian sources is seen as inadequate for conveying Islamic pedagogy. A more structured, text-based approach rooted in Islamic teachings is necessary to meet the course's educational goals (Interviewee 3).

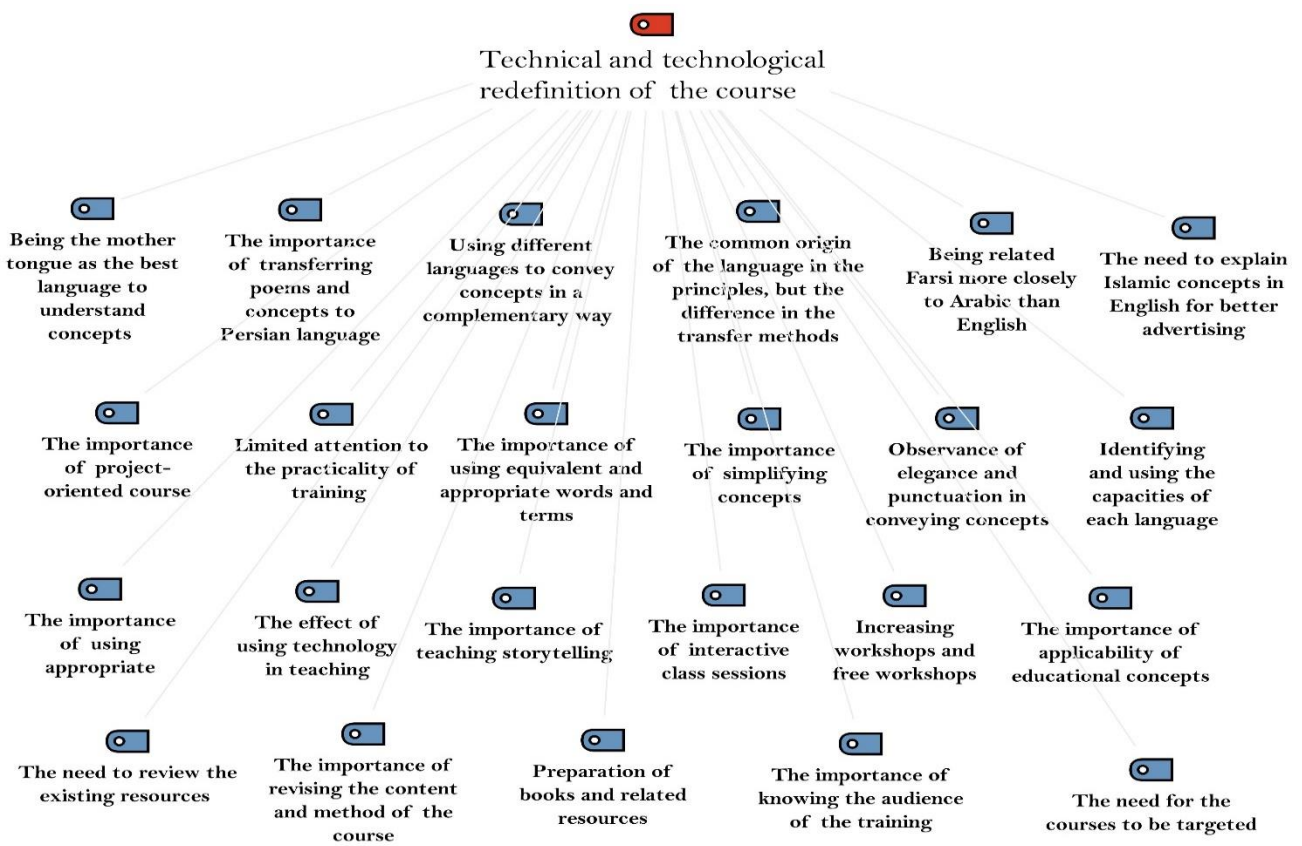
Defining the course's audience and setting clear objectives is crucial. While Persian is often preferred, experts support a blended use of languages—Persian, English, and even Arabic—to maximize understanding. Each language offers distinct modes of expression, and using them together can enhance the delivery of ideological content (Interviewee 19).

Though Persian and Arabic are linguistically closer than English, it is vital to acknowledge the unique educational functions each language can serve. Teachers should adapt their methods to match the capabilities of each language without assuming any one language holds exclusive expressive power (Interviewee 19).

Concept simplification, careful word choice, and stylistic clarity are necessary. Another key issue is the course's lack of practical engagement. Incorporating project-based learning around Islamic themes would enrich students' understanding and foster deeper connections to the material (Interviewee 13).

Lastly, interviewees suggest integrating storytelling techniques and increasing classroom interactivity. Modern teaching tools and technologies, whether used in sessions or workshops, are considered essential for successfully applying Islamic concepts in English language teaching (Interviewee 16).

Finally, the theme of the sixth organizer and its basic themes can be seen in Figure 6.



**Figure 6: Technical and Technological Redefinition of the Course**

## Discussion

This study explored insights gained from the Islamic Education Course in Iranian MA programs, focusing on the complexities of English–Persian dualism. The research examined how specific meanings attach to language and how languages like English carry political, cultural, and

ideological weight, as discussed by Pennycook (2002), Ndebele (1987), and Searle (1983). These scholars critique English as a colonial tool and emphasize that languages shape perception and values.

In Iran and many Islamic societies, resisting linguistic domination has long been a concern. To counter this, scholars emphasize moving beyond conventional narratives to reimagine the divine and transformative role of language (Iranmehr & Davari, 2018). Language influences thought, and thus polluted linguistic frameworks can corrupt knowledge. For Islamic societies to flourish intellectually and morally, language must be viewed as a sacred vessel, not a neutral tool.

According to Madandar Arani, Amani, and Sorkhabi (2023), achieving a society based on Hayate Tayyebah (ideal Islamic life) and justice requires a strategic educational roadmap aligned with Islamic-Iranian values. The research findings were structured across key themes: course obstacles, rethinking the role of teachers and students, challenges in concept transfer, language-culture intersections, and technical and methodological improvements.

The first research question asked how English–Persian dualism impacts English teaching after the Islamic Education Course. Interviews with nineteen professors in Sabzevar revealed new insights aligning with, and in some cases expanding upon, existing scholarship. A recurring theme was the perception that English lacks the depth to convey Islamic values fully, and that religious or ideological concepts often lose meaning in translation.

Theme 5 emphasized the interdependence of language, culture, and thought. Mohammadzadeh (2022) argues that language and education are linked by shared foundations: communication and thought. Education, rooted in language, depends on interaction. Language conveys ideas, while thought shapes education, making both inseparable. Communication is also

central: it allows knowledge transfer between teacher and student, highlighting language's foundational role in education.

Cultural factors further influence second-language education. Garcia (2005) states that language is an integral part of culture and that respecting students' cultural-linguistic backgrounds enhances learning. Moll (2005) promotes incorporating “funds of knowledge”—students’ lived experiences—into curriculum design. Gonzalez et al. (2005) define these funds as everyday knowledge embedded in cultural activities. This approach encourages inclusive pedagogy and respects student diversity.

Aimillia Mohd (2013) adds that English literature carries universal values, but recent decades have seen confusion about those values, opening space for materialist, Eurocentric interpretations. In Muslim contexts like Malaysia, this trend has marginalized Islamic spiritual readings. Reclaiming literature as a space for Tawhidic values can help Muslim students access global knowledge while honoring their beliefs.

The second research question examined professors’ attitudes toward the English language post-course. Four main themes emerged: the language’s perceived ideological baggage, its global dominance, its limited utility for conveying religious concepts, and the need for pedagogical reform. Many interviewees criticized the colonial legacy of English literature curricula in Iran, echoing critiques from Glück (2018) and Zeiny (2019) about the need to decolonize media and communication studies.

While fields like “World Literature in English” are expanding, many Iranian English departments still emphasize British and American classics. This reflects ongoing cultural and academic dependency, making it difficult for Islamic educational institutions to integrate indigenous spiritual frameworks into English language and literature courses.

The study concludes that Islamic Education Courses, if refined, could empower professors to critically engage with English teaching. Integrating Islamic concepts into the curriculum could encourage more culturally grounded pedagogy, reduce dependence on Western epistemology, and support the broader goal of cultural and intellectual independence in Iranian higher education. Enhancing this course through updated resources, teacher training, bilingual strategies, and culturally relevant materials can facilitate a more holistic educational approach grounded in Islamic values.

Theme 2 examines the reconsideration of English teachers' roles. Salimi Ismail and Safarzadeh (2019) found that many educators recognize only American and British English, ignoring other global varieties. Teachers argued that language instruction should address both global and local needs rather than merely reflect the culture of English-speaking countries. Additionally, Ghaani and Pauline (2021) highlighted that while EFL teachers had positive attitudes toward critical thinking (CT), their practical understanding and implementation were limited, especially in listening classes. In contrast, more CT sub-skills were practiced in speaking classes. Overall, foreign language teachers are responsible for developing language skills and critical awareness.

Theme 3 emphasizes rethinking the role of students. Findings echo Yaqoubi and Pouramid (2013), who supported the use of students' first language in English education. However, Persian is often banned in private schools. Students expressed a desire for autonomy and recognition of their role in knowledge exchange. In reconstructionist environments, learners are expected to be active participants, problem-solvers, and critical thinkers. Thus, any MA-level Islamic Education Course should be designed to support both students and professors effectively.

Theme 4 focuses on invisible borders in concept transfer. Prah (2018) argued that Eurocentric biases in African education hinder its relevance and development. Local languages are essential for meaningful education. Similarly, Davari et al. (2021) identified ideological polarization in Iran's English language policy following post-revolution reforms. Some oppose the ideological framing of English education, while others support it. Addressing these opposing views is vital for improving English language planning and evaluation in Iran.

Theme 6 emerged from interviews about the technical and technological redefinition of the Islamic Education Course. Respondents emphasized the need to analyze, design, and improve the course environment and content. Studies by Moradian, Ramezanzadeh, and Khazaie (2022) highlight the need to review both Islamic and Western approaches to English education. These studies point to the strengths and limitations of modernist, postmodernist, and Islamic frameworks. Notably, Islamic and postmodernist perspectives align closely when Islam is viewed as an educational paradigm.

Finally, a recurring point in interviews is that neither English nor Persian alone is sufficient for conveying deep ideological concepts in Islamic education. Instead, a blend of both, with the inclusion of Arabic, is necessary. The failure to transfer religious and cultural concepts into English contributes to the continued gap and tension in the English–Persian language duality within Iran's educational system.

## **Conclusion**

This study aimed to explore the gained insights among Iranian English language professors after completing the Islamic Education Course in MA programs, with a particular focus on English-Persian dualism. Drawing on qualitative data from semi-structured interviews, the

research identified key themes that reflect deep ideological, cultural, and educational tensions embedded in language use and instruction. The study revealed that language functions beyond communication—it acts as a vessel of thought, culture, and power. When used in educational settings, especially in Islamic contexts, the dominance of English presents both epistemological challenges and opportunities for redefinition.

Findings demonstrated that professors experienced a re-evaluation of their roles, recognized the limitations of conveying Islamic concepts through English alone, and emphasized the need to integrate Persian and even Arabic for fuller religious expression. The study also underscored the shortcomings of current educational frameworks, which often ignore the spiritual, cultural, and ideological needs of learners. Moreover, it stressed the necessity of moving beyond imported, Western-dominated epistemologies in favor of contextually grounded paradigms that embrace Tawhidic perspectives and Hayate Tayyebah as the basis for curriculum development.

The participants called for a rethinking of English teaching practices, placing equal importance on local and global demands, while addressing the identity and cultural concerns of Iranian students. English should no longer be taught as a mere linguistic tool, but rather in a manner that reflects the values and worldview of its learners. The study concluded that educational reform in Iran must involve not just curricular changes but a broader intellectual movement toward decolonizing knowledge and embracing indigenous perspectives. This dual-language framework, if approached critically and intentionally, can empower educators and learners to navigate both linguistic worlds without compromising their cultural and spiritual integrity.

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