

An Analysis of Life Skills in the Content of Seventh-Grade English Language Books in Jordan

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Abstract

The current study aimed at analyzing the content of the Seventh-Grade English language books according to life skills during the academic year 2021\2022 and identifying the life skills latent in the English language books for the Seventh-Grade. To achieve the aims of the study, the researchers prepared a list consisting of (38) life skills for (9) fields. The researchers adopted the analytical descriptive approach; the study sample consisted of Student's Book and Activity Book. The researchers analyzed the whole content of the English language books for the Seventh-Grade according to this instrument. The arbitrators agreed on the validity of the analysis instrument, the stability of the analysis was calculated between the main researcher and the second researcher. The findings indicated that the content of the English language books for Seventh-Grade included all areas of life skills, but with varying percentages, as the first area (Effective Communicative) achieved the highest percentage of (35.82%), (Self-Awareness Building) by a percentage of (16.05%), (Interpersonal Relationship) with a percentage of (11.19%), (Critical Thinking) with a percentage of (7.46%), (Coping with Stress and Emotions) with a percentage of (7.03%), (Problem Solving) and (Creative Thinking) with the same percentage (5.72%), (Decision Making) with a percentage of (5.64%), then the lowest (Empathy) with a percentage of (5.38%). In light of the findings, the researchers suggested some recommendations such as; taking into account consistency, integration, and balance in the ratios of including life skills fields in the English language books for the Seventh-Grade.

Keywords

Life Skills, English Language,
Seventh-Grade, Jordan



I. Introduction

The current era has witnessed several rapid changes which lead to multiple issues and psychological conflicts that face the learners and affect their communication with themselves and others. It is imperative that the learners be highly qualified to confront these conflicts and elevate their personalities to achieve the greatest degree of harmony, happiness, and mental health. The learner cannot live isolated from others, family, friends, and colleagues, he cannot live without interacting with all sides, and this will not be available unless he has life skills that enable him to deal and interact with others.

The revolution of rapid information, the growing knowledge, and the momentum of scientific and technical innovations in various different languages have put great responsibility on the educational systems in order to prepare the learners and provide them with whatever they need to go with the flow of knowledge, comprehend and adapt with it

(Richards, 2001; Keshta, 2000). The educational system in its essence is concerned with gaining life skills that qualify learners to live and deal with people and participate in development work all those are important outcomes of the educational curricula (Javrh&Mozina,2018; Dhanasekaran, 2018). UNICEF (2012) report indicated that (164) countries have included life skills as means to enable learners and establish positive behaviors to face life circumstances.

According to the General Guidelines and General Specific Outcomes, the English language textbooks (Action Pack) series are used in Jordan public schools for the learners of the Basic and the Secondary stages. It states that teaching of the English language should be interactive in nature and assessment should be done using the communicative language teaching basic principles. The Jordanian MOE presented English curricula outcomes where the English language textbooks integrated authentic activities which would assist learners to develop their skills.

There is a necessity to pay attention to life skills and to provide learners with them in order to face the modern changes and challenges that characterize this era. These skills bring learners successful coexistence, adaptation and flexibility, and success in their practical and personal lives (Bardhan, 2016). Life skills are diverse and include all aspects of life; therefore they are important for the learners:

- Assisting the learners in facing life different situations and enabling them to deal with them wisely.
- Diversity of life skills that the learner's needs in various areas of life, whether it is at home, school, or a relationship with others, and possessing these skills gives the student self-confidence, pride and self-esteem when he performs work and masters it when asked to do so (Monteiro & Shetty, 2016; Yadav & Iqbal, 2009).
- The learner's success depends to a large extent on the experiences and skills he possesses. Life skills contribute to linking the student's theoretical and applied study.
- What the learners acquire helps in one way or another in increasing his motivation.
- Helps the learners to identify themselves and discover their relationship with others (Reddy, 2017; Gayatri et al., 2017, Lagat, 2017).

1.1 The Statement of the Problem

It became essential for the educational system to adjust the curricula in general and English language curriculum in specific and include its academic textbooks the useful life skills in order to assist the learners to comprehend life skills and their effect on their societies and enhance the daily life of the learners. Through the researchers' knowledge of the educational content of English language books for the Seventh-Grade - The main researcher being an EFL teacher for the Basic and the Secondary stages-. The researchers found deficiencies surrounding these books in terms of their inclusion of life skills.

And in order to be sure, the researchers have done several interviews and discussions with EFL teachers as well as EFL supervisors about the issue. Thus, the necessity of subjecting content of EFL books for the Seventh-Grade to continuous evaluation and analysis to face the global expansions and challenges imposed and to reconsider the educational curricula. Thus study problem could be concluded in the following main question:

1. What is the availability of life skills in the content of the English language books prescribed for seventh-grade learners approved by the MOE in Jordan?

1.2 The Study Significance

The researchers wanted for analyzing the English language books for Seventh-Grade according to life skills. The significance of the study is:

- Getting to be aware of the reality of English language books for Seventh-Grade content in light of including life skills.
- The study is employed for the progressive development of school textbooks in general and English language books for Seventh-Grade in particular.
- The study findings will direct the attention of specialists and experts in MOE in Jordan towards developing English language books for Seventh-Grade to keep pace with modern educational directives.
- This study might be useful in reconsidering EFL textbooks in general and English language books for Seventh-Grade in particular which leads to providing learners with life skills, experiences, and information by including them in these books.

1.3 The Study Purpose

The study's purpose is to analyze Seventh-Grade English language books based on the availability of life skills and to locate life skills' percentages and frequencies.

1.4 The Study Limitations

This study is limited to the English language books Seventh-Grade in Jordan during the academic year 2021/2022.

II. Review of Literature

2.1. Content Analysis

Content analysis is an essential technique used for analyzing information and it is one of the scientific research ways in order to take care of principle content and standards which leads to analyzing the content into (words, phrases, or a thought) and describing it as quantitative and qualitative description in a scientific organized way not based on Self-impressions and random treats. (Yousef, 2015).

2.2. The Importance of Life Skills

Life skills are amongst the necessary and important requirements for the learners in order to adapt and keep pace with the rapid changes of the current era, the learners are in need of life skills that enable them to live and face life challenges in a more positive way, It also enables them to think constructively about the course of things around them relying on themselves in decision making, it also enables to comprehend the new technological developments (Rani & Menka, 2019; Irannezhad, 2017; Lagat, 2017) . Life skills enable the learners to manage in a successful manner while facing many responsibilities. It also enables them to interact well with members of their community, by reflecting all that with themselves enabling learners of life skills and use them to form positive thoughts of themselves and others, they can also adept personally and socially, as well as acquire an acceptable degree of psychological compatibility (Nivedita & Singh, 2016; Al Masri & Smadi, 2016).

2.3 Characteristics of Life Skills

- Diversity: it includes the material and immaterial aspects related to the methods of satisfying the individual's needs and the requirements of his interaction with life and its development.

- Difference: where life skills differ from one society to another according to different cultures, values, trends, and degrees of progress, as they differ from one plateau to another, and on this basis, life skills are affected by time and place.
- Degree of influence: life skills depend on the reciprocal relationship between the person and the society in which he lives, and between society and the person and the degree of their influence on the other.
- Interactive: aims to help the individual successfully interact with life and develop ways of living life, which means they need to interact with traditional life situations in new and developed ways (Prajapati&Sharma, 2017; Ahmad,2016;Fahim,2005).

III. Research Methods

3.1 The Study Population

The study population consisted of the English language books for the Seventh-Grade (Action Pack) which is taught in Jordan during the academic year 2021/2022.

3.2 The Study Sample

The sample of the study consisted of all content of Seventh-Grade English language books "Student's Book" and "Activity Book". Table (1) shows the distribution of English language books for the Seventh-Grade content.

Table 1. Distribution of Modules and Number of Pages on Seventh-Grade Books

	Module	Pages
Student's Book	6	84
Activity Book	6	85
Total	12	169

3.3 The Study Instrument

To achieve the purposes of the study, the researchers developed a list of life skills included in English language books for seventh-grade in Jordan based on the educational literature, the list consisted of (9) fields, while each field has a number of items. The researchers developed life skills with the nine fields

“(1) Problem-solving (2) Critical thinking (3) Effective communication, (4) Decision making, (5) Creative thinking (6) Interpersonal relationship (7) Self-awareness building (8) Empathy (9) Coping with stress and emotions”, to analyze the content of English language books for Seventh-Grade to check the availability and distribution of life skills in English language books for Seventh-Grade.

3.4 Instrument Validity

The instrument validity was evaluated by a panel of specialists (universities professors and seventh-grade EFL teachers and EFL supervisors).

3.5 Instrument Reliability

For ensuring the reliability of the analysis in the sense of obtaining the same findings even if the analyst differs or the time during which the analysis was performed varies.

- The agreement between the researchers to work on each of them separately and to reach the maximum degree of agreement with the results when using the same analysis units.

Table 2. Coefficient Correlation among Results and Reliability through Researchers

	Domain	Results
1	Problem solving	0.87
2	Critical thinking	0.81
3	Effective communication	0.88
4	Decision making	0.79
5	Creative thinking	0.86
6	Interpersonal relationship	0.82
7	Self-awareness building	0.81
8	Empathy	0.82
9	Coping with stress and emotions	0.84
	Total	0.83

3.6 Analyzing the Content of Seventh-Grade English Language Books

- I. The analysis objective: to determine the contents of the English language books for Seventh-Grade, according to the final list prepared for this purpose.
- II. Study sample: All English language books content for Seventh-Grade during the academic year 2021\2022.
- III. Analysis unit: It has been relied on the explicit and implicit idea as a unit of analysis by the researchers for its relevance to the nature of the content, the list paragraphs, and repetition as a unit of the census.
- IV. Content Analysis Steps: The English language books for Seventh-Grade were analyzed on the following steps according to life skills:
 - a) Reading all the content of English language books for Seventh-Grade, as an initial reading.
 - b) Re-reading again is more accurate and comes from reading, a tool for identifying explicit ideas and implicit ideas to enable the researchers to apply the list's paragraphs and areas.
 - c) Unloading the findings of the analysis in the list of life skills in its final form, to be interpreted and processed statistically later, which was prepared in advance.

3.7 Statistical Analysis

To analyze the content of English language books for Seventh-Grade in Jordan, the researchers used these following statistical forms:

- I. Frequencies and percentages.
- II. Pearson correlation.

IV. Discussion

This study aimed for investigating the availability of life skills in the content of the English language textbook prescribed for seventh-grade learners approved by the MOE in Jordan. These life skills are “Problem-solving, Critical thinking, Effective Communication, Decision making, Creative thinking, Interpersonal relationship, Self-awareness building, Empathy, Coping with stress, and emotional life skills”. To achieve the aim, the study attempted to answer the study question, the researchers used a modified content analysis card developed by the researchers and refereed by a jury of experts. The study purpose was to analyze English language books for Seventh-Grade based on life skills availability and to determine the frequencies and percentages of these life skills included in these books.

4.1. Findings and Discussion Related to the Study Question: What is the Availability of Life Skills in the Content of the English Language Textbook Prescribed for Seventh-Grade Learners Approved by the Moe in Jordan?

To answer the study question the researchers analyzed English language books for Seventh-Grade. The findings are shown in table (3)

Table 3. Life Skills Included in English Language Books for Seventh-Grade

Domains	Frequency		
	Total	Percentage	Rank
Problem Solving Life Skills	66	5.72%	6
Critical Thinking Life Skills	86	7.46%	4
Effective Communicative Life Skills	413	35.82%	1
Decision Making Life Skills	65	5.64%	8
Creative Thinking Life Skills	66	5.72%	6
Interpersonal Relationship Life Skills	129	11.19%	3
Self-Awareness Building Life Skills	185	16.05%	2
Empathy Life Skills	62	5.38%	9
Coping with Stress and Emotions of Life Skills	81	7.03%	5
Total	1153	100%	

It is clear from Table (3) that the content of the English language books for Seventh-Grade included all areas of life skills, but with varying percentages, as the first area (Effective Communicative) achieved the highest percentage of (35.82%), followed by (Self-Awareness Building) by a percentage of (16.05%), followed by (Interpersonal Relationship) with a percentage of (11.19%), then followed by (Critical Thinking) with a percentage of (7.46%), then followed by (Coping with Stress and Emotions) with a percentage of (7.03%), then followed by (Problem Solving) and (Creative Thinking) with the same percentage (5.72%), then followed by (Decision Making) with a percentage of (5.64%), then followed by (Empathy) with a percentage of (5.38%), in light of the analysis results above, it can be explained that the "Effective Communicative life skills" obtained a high percentage compared to other life skills to a large extent. It is noticed from

the results that it is preferable to reconsider the content of the English language books for Seventh-Grade to organize and balance all areas of life skills in them.

The researchers identified the distribution of life skills fields and their items in the content of the English language books for Seventh-Grade. They think that it is clear that there is a different range of frequencies among the fields and even in one field. The analysis results indicate that there should be a balance of distributing the life skills fields and the items among the modules' activities.

Table 4. The Frequencies of Life Skills Fields in each Module of the English Language Books for Seventh-Grade

Life Skills Domains	Module						Total
	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	
Problem Solving	11	9	12	12	9	13	66
Critical Thinking	13	17	15	14	15	12	86
Effective Communicative	76	75	65	71	64	62	413
Decision making	14	14	8	10	8	11	65
Creative Thinking	14	11	12	9	8	12	66
Interpersonal Relationship	30	22	20	18	20	19	129
Self-Awareness Building	33	27	26	32	36	31	185
Empathy	13	13	11	9	6	10	62
Coping with Stress and Emotions	12	20	12	13	11	13	81
Total	216	208	181	188	177	183	1153

Table (4) shows that the distribution of the various life skills in the English language book for Seventh-Grade is irregular and inaccurate, as the life skills must be acquired by the learners in the Seventh-Grade in order to help them in daily life.

Actually, the English language books for Seventh-Grade contained different life skills but with a different distribution. The researchers think that students' level affects the choice and the distribution of these life skills to be contained. It is noted that recently there was great attention paid by Jordan MOE to life skills because it is necessary to engage learners in real-life situations. Also, the distribution of life skills among the modules' activities was random, it is noticed that effective communication life skills were existed and repeated great the seventh grade.

Also, this distribution did not follow any strategy, so it will not be good for Seventh-Grade learners, therefore the MOE in Jordan must focus on teaching learners these life skills step by step, by drawing a good strategy.

The findings indicated that the EFL designers do not care about the inclusion of these life skills in the English language books for Seventh-Grade. Since, most life skills are repeated and proportions few and ineffectively to the learner. For instance, learners in this grade need to acquire solving problem life skills to disband the difficulties they face. Decision-making life skills were a very few repeated, and proportions are few, although the demand for learners to learn such a skill. also, there is less attention paid to empathy life skills, although it is a very important skill for learners to be cooperative and caring with others and colleagues. The researchers think that these skills need to be taken into consideration because learners have to be prepared to face life.

Shortly, The study found that the distribution of life skills in English language books for Seventh-Grade came low and random levels, and do not achieve the desired interest which means there is no appropriate strategy used to include life skills English language books for Seventh-Grade. In fact, English language books for Seventh-Grade include all of

these life skills, but still, there is a gap. Though, life skills are essential in the educational process especially for students in this stage. Seventh-Grade Students need life skills throughout their lives, so, it is of great importance to train them on using these skills, and to include these skills in their books.

V. Recommendations and Suggestions

In light of the findings, the researchers suggested some recommendations such as:

- Taking into the areas of life skills which percentages are few in the English language book for the Seventh-Grade.
- -Taking into account consistency, integration, and balance in the ratios of including life skills fields in the English language book for the Seventh-Grade.
- The researchers proposed a number of suggestions, including:
- Conducting a similar study analyzing the textbooks of English language books for the different grades according to life skills.
- Training educational cadres on the use of educational aids, modern applications, and educational strategies to teach life skills in the education process.

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