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# INCULCATING SOCIAL SKILLS THROUGH DISTANCE LEARNING: CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL CERTIFICATE ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS OF ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY

**1. Fakhar Abbas**
M.Phil Scholar, Department of Education, The University of Lahore, Sargodha Campus, Pakistan.
Email: Fakhartullah512@gmail.com
**2. Dr. Fareeha Sami**
Associate Professor, Department of Education, The University of Lahore, Sargodha Campus, Pakistan.
Email: fareeha.sami@ed.uol.edu.pk

***Abstract***

This study was intended to analyze the contents of the textbooks of Secondary School Certificate English in order to see how much the contents were contributing in developing social skills in the students. Content analysis method was utilized for qualitative research for collecting and analyzing the data. The population of the study comprised all textbooks of Secondary School Certificate published by Allama Iqbal Open University. The textbooks of two subjects (English course code 207 and English course code 221) were selected using the method of purposive sampling. A checklist designed on the basis of literature review about social skills was used as the research instrument. The checklist was also validated by five PhD experts in the field. In order to find out the social skills mentioned in the checklist, manifest and latent contents of the selected textbooks were analyzed. It is concluded that the contents of English textbooks (CC 207 and CC 221) helped in developing these five social skills. Communication, empathy, interpersonal relations, cooperation, and decision-making skills. However, contents of English textbooks helped in developing the communication skill at a high level.

## Introduction

Education aims primarily at personal development that involves various dimensions. Personal development implies preparing people to serve both societal and individual interests. Human personality and behavior emerge early in life. Proper development in children guarantees future construction of sound societies. Samimi (2021) highlighted that cognitive, social skill, physical, psychological, and emotional development is essential during childhood years as future citizens of the country. Families and communities have considerable influence over children growing up. According to Aguilar et al. (2021, p. 32), environmental surroundings play a crucial role in the proper development of children. The literature presents substantial evidence about each dimension, but integrating all aspects within one educational framework requires further research.

In the belief that the environment in which a child grows has a profound effect on his or her overall development, cultivating social skills now becomes a critical part of the early education experience. Social skills including how to communicate, cooperate, empathize, regulate emotions and solve problems help children to interact effectively with their families, school, and community. More recent research has highlighted that these skills are cultivated in early childhood and that fostering them in early years has an impact on healthy peer relationships, school engagement, and on-going SE well-being (Elias & Moceri, 2019).

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Even with a limited face-to-face interaction, open and distance learning (ODL) provides new opportunities for developing children's social skills. A digitally designed environment can support communication, collaboration and expression of thoughts and feelings with interactive activities, virtual peer interactions and guided family involvement. The researchers believe that the structured social interactions in ODL, including group assignments/activities, video-based discussion, and co-problem solving between educators and children/caregivers, can foster children's social competencies.

In open distance learning (ODL), social skill development through reading books is the process of learning theory, contemplation about interpersonal concept, and limited practicing interpersonal skills in interactive learning environment, such as online forum, assignment, and virtual discussion. In ODL, the book proves to be an essential medium for raising awareness about communication, empathy, relationships and group dynamics, as they are not as easily developed in a face-to-face environment.

Open and distance learning (ODL) plays a supportive role in social skills development by providing structured learning through books and guided activities that encourage reflection and practical application. Through reading-based content, children and learners can understand social behaviours, emotional awareness, and positive interactions, while online discussions and caregiver involvement help translate this knowledge into real-life social experiences, even in the absence of physical classrooms. (UNESCO, 2020; Johnson & Cooke, 2021)

### 1.1 Statement of the problem

Large numbers of students are unable to attend traditional schools or colleges due to financial constraints, geographical barriers, work commitments, or other socioeconomic challenges. (UNESCO, 2019; World Bank, 2020)

In distance and nonformal learning the importance of textbooks well known among the educationists. In distance and nonformal learning students and teachers are separated by a physical distance so, the textbook plays a role of teacher for the student these textbooks not only inculcate the intellectual abilities among students. But also provide different skills among students. Social skills are one of the most important skills to be taught through content of the textbooks. (Moore & Kearsley, 2019; UNESCO, 2020; Commonwealth of Learning, 2021).

Keeping in view this fact the study focused on the content of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) program English textbooks and explored the social skills that were developed through the content of these textbooks.

### 1.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

**Objectives of the study were as under:**

1. To identify the social skills that form part of the content of the SSC English Textbooks CC 207 and CC 221.
2. To assess the extent of contribution of the content of the SSC English Textbooks to social skills development

### 1.3. Research questions

**The study was supposed to answer the following questions:**

1. What are the essential social skills for different levels of students?
2. To what extent was the level of social skills exist in class SSC English textbook of allama Iqbal Open University?

## 2. Research Methodology

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This chapter explains the procedures and methods used in the study. It includes the research design, population, sample and sampling techniques, development of research instruments, validation, pilot testing, reliability calculation, factor analysis, administration of the research tool, and the statistical techniques used for data analysis.

### 2.1. Research design

Qualitative research methods with descriptive and inferential statistics were used in this study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Achmad, Irwan Hamzani et al., 2023).

## 3. Population

For the content analysis phase, the textbooks of SSC developed by the allama Iqbal Open University constituted the population of the study.

## 4. Sampling and sample of the study

The sample for this study was selected using purposive sampling, which is considered an appropriate technique for content analysis (Campbell et al., 2020). In content analysis, texts are selected based on their relevance to the research context, including their sources, genres, situations, intertextual relationships, and time periods. Purposive sampling involves selecting information rich texts that are most suitable for addressing the research questions (Ames, Glenton, & Lewin, 2019). For the present study, the SSC textbooks of English, these textbooks were developed by the allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad

## Source of Data

Textbooks of English, SSC (CC 207, CC 221) written by allama Iqbal Open University were the sources of data in this study.

### Data Collection Tool

A checklist containing social skills identified in the literature reviewed was made. This checklist was made in order to identify social skills contained in the content of English for SSC, published by allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad.

### Unit of Analysis

Whatever is to be analyzed is referred to as the unit of analysis. Words, phrases, sentences, pictures, activities and exercises have been identified as unit of analysis in this study.

### Data Analysis

In order to analyze the social skills included in the checklist, selected English textbooks CC 207, CC 221 were analyzed through content analysis. Both manifest and latent content were analyzed to collect and analyze data. Manifest content means visible information in the textbooks like words, pictures and images which could be understood without any interpretation. Latent content means underlying meanings of the text, pictures or activities that need interpretation in order to find out how they help in developing social skills (Kyngäs, 2020).

Both manifest and latent content were considered in this research. Manifest content refers to the number of words, phrases and pictures that represent social skills explicitly. For instance, the phrase “We should speak softly with others” represents the social skill of communication. Moreover, sentences and activities that do not explicitly represent social skills but contribute to them indirectly were also taken into account in this research. For example, the activity “Match the words with the pictures” develops decision-making skills because it stimulates comparing and making decisions. The results were arranged in accordance with identified social skills in the results section.

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**Social skills analysis**

In order to identify social skills in SSC (CC 207, CC 221) textbooks, manifest and latent content (words, pictures phrases, sentences and activities) was analysed. The frequencies and percentages of each social skill and their totals were counted. Table (1) shows the frequencies and percentages of social skills in SSC English textbooks.

**Analysis of content SSC English textbook (CC-207) of Allama Iqbal open university with respect to social skills**

**Table 1**

| Sr. no | Social skills | Words Frequency | Phrases Frequency | Sentences Frequency | Pictures Frequency | Exercises / Activities frequency | Total frequency/ percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Communication skills | 62 | 45 | 58 | 14 | 22 | 201<br>42% |
| 2. | Empathy skills | 14 | 8 | 12 | 2 | 5 | 42<br>9% |
| 3. | Interpersonal relationship skills | 38 | 26 | 32 | 9 | 14 | 119<br>25% |
| 4. | Cooperation skills | 21 | 15 | 18 | 6 | 8 | 68<br>14% |
| 5. | Decision making | 16 | 11 | 14 | 4 | 9 | 54<br>11% |

This table reflects the frequency distribution of five social skills within the content of the SSC English textbook (CC 207), where Communication skills lead with a total frequency of 201 (62 words, 45 phrases, 58 sentences, 14 pictures, 22 exercises), followed by Interpersonal Relationship skills at 119 (38 words, 26 phrases, 32 sentences, 9 pictures, 14 exercises), Cooperation skills at 68 (21 words, 15 phrases, 18 sentences, 6 pictures, 8 exercises), Decision-making skills at 54 (16 words, 11 phrases, 14 sentences, 4 pictures, 9 exercises), and Empathy skills at 42 (14 words, 8 phrases, 12 sentences, 2 pictures, 5 exercises).

**4.1.2 Analysis of content SSC English textbook (CC-221) of Allama Iqbal open university with respect to social skills**

**Table 2**

| Sr. no | Social skills | Words Frequency | Phrases Frequency | Sentences Frequency | Pictures Frequency | Exercises / Activities frequency | Total frequency/ percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Communication skills | 74 | 48 | 52 | 18 | 15 | 207<br>40% |
| 2. | Empathy skills | 16 | 12 | 15 | 3 | 4 | 50<br>10% |
| 3. | Interpersonal relationship skills | 42 | 28 | 34 | 12 | 11 | 127<br>24% |
| 4. | Cooperation skills | 24 | 18 | 22 | 9 | 8 | 81<br>15% |
| 5. | Decision | 19 | 14 | 16 | 4 | 5 | 58 |

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| | |
|---|---|
| making | 11% |

This table reflects the frequency distribution of five social skills within the content of the SSC English textbook (CC 221), where Communication skills lead with a total frequency of 207 (74 words, 48 phrases, 52 sentences, 18 pictures, 15 exercises), followed by Interpersonal Relationship skills at 127 (42 words, 28 phrases, 34 sentences, 12 pictures, 11 exercises), Cooperation skills at 81 (24 words, 18 phrases, 22 sentences, 9 pictures, 8 exercises), Decision-making skills at 58 (19 words, 14 phrases, 16 sentences, 4 pictures, 5 exercises), and Empathy skills at 50 (16 words, 12 phrases, 15 sentences, 3 pictures, 4 exercises.

**Analysis of content from SSC Allama Iqbal open university English textbooks concerning social skills**

**Table 3**

| **Social Skills** | | **Subject English (CC 207)** | **Subject English (CC 221)** | **Skill wise Frequency and percentage out of total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Communication skills** | Frequency | 201 | 207 | 408 |
| | percentage | 42% | 40% | 41% |
| **Empathy skills** | Frequency | 42 | 50 | 92 |
| | percentage | 9% | 10% | 10% |
| **Interpersonal relationship skills** | Frequency | 119 | 127 | 246 |
| | percentage | 25% | 24% | 25% |
| **Cooperation skills** | Frequency | 68 | 81 | 149 |
| | percentage | 14% | 15% | 15% |
| **Decision making skills** | Frequency | 54 | 58 | 112 |
| | percentage | 11% | 11% | 11% |
| **Total frequency** | | 484 | 523 | |

This table shows the number of times each social skill is present in the manifest /latent content (words/ phrases/ sentences/ pictures/ activities/ exercises) of each subject. This table indicates the frequency of occurrence of each social skill among all the five social skills which are present in the textbooks of English (CC 207), English (CC 221). In the English CC 207 textbook there were words/ phrases/ sentences/ pictures/ activities/ exercises in total 484 places which developed the social skills such as Communication, Empathy, Interpersonal Relationship, Cooperation and Decision-Making skills. In the textbook of English CC 207 there were words/phrases/sentences/pictures/activities/exercises in 201 places which helped develop the communication skills, in 42 places developed the empathy skills, in 119 places developed the interpersonal relationship skills, in 68 places developed the cooperation skills and in 54 places developed the decision-making skills.

There were words/ phrases/ sentences/ pictures/ activities/ exercises in the English textbook CC 221 which supported the development of skills of communication, empathy, interpersonal relationship, cooperation, and decision making at 523 places. The content of the English textbooks CC 221 supported the development of skills of communication at 207 places, supported the development of skills of empathy at 50 places, supported the development of skills of interpersonal relationship at 127 places, supported the development of skills of cooperation at 81 places, and supported the development of skills of decision making at 58 places.

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In order to find out the extent to which the SSC English text books have the content which help develop different social skills, the following criterion was used.

Criterion for determination of the extent of existence of social skills supporting content

**Table 4**

| Range of frequency(Percentage) of social skill existence | Extent/level |
|---|---|
| Below than 20% time occurrence (in selected 2 text books) | Low |
| 20%-30% time occurrence (in selected 2 text books) | Medium |
| Above 30% time occurrence (in selected 2 text books) | High |

In order to find out to what extent the contents of SSC English textbooks provide help in developing various kinds of social skills, the level of existence has been determined on the basis of frequency of occurrence of various social skills.

Extent/Level of existence of social skills supporting contents in SSC English text books

**Table 5**

| Sr. No | Social skill | Frequency (Percentage) | Extent/level |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Communication skills | 41% | High |
| 2 | Empathy skills | 10% | Low |
| 3 | Interpersonal relationship skills | 25% | Medium |
| 4 | Cooperation skills | 15% | Low |
| 5 | Decision making skills | 11% | Low |

The following table shows the extent of the existence of each social skill in the content of SSC.

Content that contributes to the development of Communication Skill exists in English textbooks of SSC to a high level (41%). Content that contributes to the development of Empathy Skill exists in English textbooks of SSC to a low level (10%). Content that contributes to the development of Interpersonal Relationship Skills exists in English textbooks of SSC to a medium level (25%). Content that contributes to the development of Cooperation Skills exists in English textbooks of SSC to a low level (15%). Content that contributes to the development of Decision Making Skill exists in English textbooks of SSC to a low level (11%).

**Results and discussion**

The present study investigated the Content Analysis of Secondary school certificate English Textbooks of Allama Iqbal open university Regarding Social Skills and examining the social skills demonstrated by SSC students. The findings revealed that the textbooks incorporate five major social skills: communication, empathy, interpersonal relationship, cooperation, and decision-making. These skills were also evident among the students, indicating a positive correspondence between the social skills embedded in the curriculum and those demonstrated by learners.

The content analysis showed that the textbooks include various words, phrases, reading passages, illustrations, and learning activities that promote these social skills alongside language learning. Thus, the AIOU English curriculum contributes not only to improving students' English proficiency but also to fostering their social competencies. These findings are consistent with Rehman et al. (2023), who reported that school textbooks promote communication, empathy, cooperation, interpersonal relationship, and

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decision-making skills, thereby supporting students' overall social development. This emphasis reflects the importance of these competencies in developing responsible individuals and productive citizens.

Among the identified social skills, communication was the most frequently represented. This finding is expected because the primary objective of English language teaching is to develop learners' communicative competence through reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Activities such as dialogues, conversations, comprehension exercises, oral presentations, and writing tasks naturally emphasize communication skills. These findings support those of Younis and Shah (2023), who concluded that secondary-level English textbooks in Pakistan provide significant opportunities for developing students' communicative competence and preparing them for academic and real-life communication.

Interpersonal relationship skills ranked second in frequency. The textbooks encourage learners to build positive relationships, respect others, appreciate diverse perspectives, and engage in collaborative learning through stories, dialogues, reading passages, and classroom activities. These findings are consistent with Hifzur-Rehman et al. (2023), who found that interpersonal relationship skills are adequately represented in school textbooks and play a significant role in students' social development.

Decision-making skills were the third most frequently identified social skill. Textbook activities such as comprehension questions, reflective exercises, and problem-solving tasks encourage learners to analyze situations critically and make informed decisions. These findings agree with Jamil, Hassan, and Godil (2024), who reported that English textbooks incorporate life skills such as critical thinking and decision-making. However, they also emphasized the need for a more systematic integration of these skills throughout the curriculum.

Cooperation skills were also evident across all 2 textbooks, although their frequency was comparatively lower than communication, interpersonal relationship, and decision-making skills. Pair work, group discussions, and collaborative learning activities encourage teamwork, idea sharing, and mutual respect. Similar findings were reported by Hifzur-Rehman et al. (2023), who observed that school textbooks promote cooperative learning and collaborative behaviour through various classroom activities.

Empathy was the least represented social skill in the analysed textbooks. Although empathy appeared in selected stories, moral lessons, and reflective activities, its overall frequency was comparatively low. Nevertheless, its inclusion demonstrates that curriculum developers recognize its importance in students' emotional and social development. These findings are supported by Jamil et al. (2024), who noted that while English textbooks include various life skills, some receive less emphasis than others. Therefore, future revisions of AIOU English textbooks should incorporate more empathy-based activities, real-life situations, and reflective exercises to strengthen students' emotional intelligence and social awareness.

**Recommendations**

The study found that empathy, cooperation, and decision-making skills are less represented in the English textbooks despite their importance for students' personal and social development. These skills help students build positive relationships, solve problems, and work effectively with others. Therefore, Directorate of curriculum development and teacher education (DCD&TE) of Allama Iqbal Open University may include more activities and lessons to strengthen these skills in line with the National Curriculum.

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