



ACECR
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Vista: Life-Wise Language Learning Syllabus

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PUBLISHER' S PREFACE

The development of our homeland, Iran, in all aspects, requires the development in the area of research as well as making use of new technology. Of course, professors, students, researchers, as well as academic institutes have a significant role in making this happen. The ACECR, as an institute emerging from the revolution with certain academic research and cultural objectives, in addition to other responsibilities, also perform certain activities like publishing academic textbooks, which are the outcome of research and academic endeavors of the faculty members of the ACECR, and other universities and research centers. May the Almighty God help us perform our duties.

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Preface

Today there is consensus among the scholars of the importance of life skills training in the context of education (Goody, 2001; Weare, 2013). Life skills are known as the abilities that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands of everyday life (World Health Organization, 1999), take more responsibility for their behaviors and actions (Hendren, Weisen & Orley, 1994), modify the contributions they make to their society (Spence 2003), and thereby to live a successful and satisfying life (Hendricks, 1996). WHO (1999) has outlined ten key life skills including, (a) decision making, (b) problem solving, (c) creative thinking, (d) critical thinking, (e) effective communication, (f) interpersonal relationship skills, (g) self-awareness, (h) empathy and understanding, (i) coping with emotions, and (j) coping with stress. Life skills education (LSE or education for life) paradigm suggests that any educational system address and meet its educators' life challenges, improve some, not to say all, aspects of their lives and thereby prepare them for a lifelong learning process. In this view, while academic excellence is not to be sacrificed, it is improved along with students' other capabilities (Walters, 1977). Therefore, every educational system is encouraged to deal with individuals' life challenges along with or yet prior to their educational needs (Behura, 2012).

English language teaching (ELT) classes are characterized by unique features which make them both distinct from other subjects of studies at schools or universities and an appropriate setting for the

implementation of LSE. In these classes a number of topics are discussed; these topics include issues related to life, music, culture, politics, society, science, etc, which are not normally raised or dealt with in other classes. In addition to the informative role of the topics, they can provide the learners with more food for thought about life. By means of such discussions, learners can reflect more on their life, trying to change the status quo. In a similar and related vein, students might take more freedom to express themselves. By speaking in another language, one can project his/her own true identity, especially in nondemocratic settings. When one speaks in another language, he/she feels free to say something they cannot express in their mother tongue owing to social or political reasons. Another important feature of ELT classes is the overuse of pair works and group works. This way of interaction and exchange of information can help the dynamicity of the class, enhancing different communicative abilities in students. The situation makes the class more dialogic and free from a monologic and narrative learning context. Moreover, in these classes the learners face another culture more directly. By reading another culture, they get more acquainted with their own home culture. This situation can help the schizophrenic nature of the class, in which two big personalities (cultures) struggle for more dominance. Home culture and the foreign culture can have dialogue in class, helping the learners to create or maintain identities. Besides, words of two languages are different which may convey different types of understanding, shedding more light on our vague grasp of things. Thus this linguistic contact of two languages makes the setting more unique.

Last but not least is the fun nature of language class. Watching movies, discussing different topics and different kinds of tasks make the class a funny friendly environment. Fun and learning come together to create an embracing atmosphere in class (Pishghadam, 2011; Pishghadam & Ghahari, 2012).

In this sense, then, this textbook is one of the first attempts to take advantage of the special features of ELT classes and to operationalize LSE via a 10-unit syllabus around emotional-social capabilities. Emotional social ability (also known as emotional intelligence or emotional quotient) was first coined by Bar-On in 1988, but was introduced in an academic article by Mayer and Salovey (1997). It is the “ability to perceive emotions, integrate emotions to facilitate thought, understand emotions and regulate them to promote personal growth” (p. 10). The key, therefore, to EI is understanding oneself and others, adapting to and coping with the immediate surroundings to be more successful in dealing with environmental demands.

From among the models proposed for emotional social ability, this book is primarily organized around Bar-On’s (2002) process-oriented mixed model. The model focuses on a number of emotional and social abilities, including the ability a) to have self-awareness, self-perception, and self-expression, b) to successfully communicate with others, c) to cope with strong emotions and, d) to adapt to change and solve problems of social or personal nature. This model is composed of five components, each with its own subcomponents.