



Character Values Representation in Iranian High School English Textbooks

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Abstract

This descriptive study aimed to examine the extent to which character values were present and their distribution in the Iranian high school English textbooks Prospect Series and Vision Series, and to determine whether these character values were violated. Quantitative data were gathered through content analysis of these two English textbook series, focusing on the frequency and distribution of the 18 character values, as defined by the checklist by Pratiwi et al. (2021). The results showed that communicative values (e.g., interaction, cooperation, and social engagement) were the most frequently represented (f = 211), reflecting the series' emphasis on basic language use and classroom interaction at the junior high school level. Values of Democratic (f=9), Honest (f=5), and Environmental caring (f=10) appeared less frequently, suggesting room for more intentional integration. Character values of being Communicative (f=93), Disciplined (f=103), and Hardworking (f=74) dominated across the Vision series, while values such as being Honest (f=6), Democratic (f=5), and Social Caring (f=11) were rarely found, indicating a gap in promoting personal initiative and participatory classroom culture. Furthermore, a closer qualitative analysis revealed several instances in which textbook content may unintentionally undermine values such as honesty, tolerance, democracy, peace-loving, creativity, and respect in Prospect Series, and tolerance, peace-loving, creativity, and respect in Vision Series through stereotyping, dichotomous moral framing, or neutral presentation of conflict-related themes. These findings suggested that character education in Iranian EFL textbooks is present but unevenly operationalized.

Keywords: character values, value education, hidden curriculum, *prospect* series, vision series, character violation

Character is broadly defined as a set of human behavioral principles that guide thoughts, attitudes, feelings, speech, and actions, which are grounded in religious norms, legal

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frameworks, cultural customs, and social etiquette ([Kamaruddin, 2012](#)). The cultivation of character is vital for nurturing socially responsible and empathetic individuals necessary for developing a successful society ([Kamaruddin, 2012](#); [Nova, 2017](#); [Pohan & Malik, 2018](#)). In each society, there are several character values, rooted in their culture, customs, and religions, which are accepted, respected, and encouraged by the society members, whereas there might be several actions, personality features, and behaviors that are discouraged ([Berkowitz & Bier, 2005](#); [Kamaruddin, 2012](#); [Lickona, 1991](#)). Contemporary discussions of character resonate with [Gardner's \(2006\)](#) framework of the *Five Minds for the Future*: the disciplined mind, the synthesizing mind, the creating mind, the respectful mind, and the ethical mind. According to Gardner, effective education should go beyond the transmission of factual knowledge and foster learners' intellectual discipline, creativity, ethical responsibility, and respect for others. These dimensions closely align with widely accepted character values such as discipline, creativity, responsibility, respect, cooperation, and ethical judgment. From this perspective, character education is not an additional component of schooling but an integral dimension of meaningful learning that prepares students to function responsibly in increasingly complex social, cultural, and global contexts ([Gardner, 2006](#)).

Two concepts related to character in educational settings are character education and character values. In educational contexts, character values play a crucial role in shaping classroom dynamics and student-teacher interactions ([Zannah & Hidayah, 2020](#)). Academic achievement is not the only aim of education these days; character formation is now equally vital in preparing students for real-world life challenges ([Afriani, 2019](#); [Pala, 2011](#); [Singh, 2019](#)). Education systems worldwide—particularly in contexts like Iran—often prioritize academic performance at the expense of systematic values education ([Amini Mashhadi & Ghaffari, 2014](#)). This imbalance is problematic because character development does not occur automatically; however, it evolves gradually through sustained exposure to values-based instruction, adult modeling, and reflective practice ([Pala, 2011](#)).

EFL classrooms, in particular, offer a powerful medium for character education because their communicative and collaborative nature naturally aligns with values such as empathy, respect, and open-mindedness ([Brown, 2001](#); [Cates, 1997](#)). English textbooks often feature narratives and dialogues reflecting global issues, cultural diversity, and moral dilemmas, thereby creating opportunities for meaningful value exploration ([Hapsari, 2013](#); [Tajik & Akbari, 2012](#)). However, implementing character education remains challenging for most English teachers since they experience difficulties in identifying contextually appropriate character values, meaningfully embedding them into lesson objectives and classroom activities, and assessing students' progress in systematic ways ([Nurjamin & Syafitri, 2021](#); [Sari, 2019](#)). Textbooks and curricula frequently present values in superficial or disconnected ways, reducing character education to generic moral slogans or isolated activities that fail to engage students critically or to connect with their lived experiences ([Afriani, 2019](#); [Asri & Deviv, 2023](#)). These

approaches rarely foster deep reflection or the internalization of ethical principles ([Berkowitz & Bier, 2005](#)).

Although many character values are widely accepted within educational systems, their internalization cannot be assumed to occur automatically. In many classrooms, these values are transmitted implicitly through classroom routines, teacher behavior, and institutional norms rather than explicit instruction ([Alsubaie, 2015](#)). Implicit value transmission, however, may lack transparency and critical engagement, potentially encouraging conformity rather than reflective moral reasoning ([Jackson et al., 1993](#)). Therefore, character values require deliberate, reflective, and pedagogically grounded integration into classroom practices to ensure meaningful character development.

Despite growing global interest in character education, there remains a notable lack of research on the intersection of EFL teaching and character education in Iran. While several international studies have explored how character values are embedded in English textbooks ([Almerico, 2014](#); [Lee & Li, 2020](#); [Hapsari, 2013](#); [Hermawan & Noerkhasanah, 2012](#); [Hirdayu et al., 2022](#); [Islami, 2016](#); [Pratiwi et al., 2021](#); [Setiawan, 2016](#); [Utami et al., 2021](#)), the Iranian context remains under-researched. Although some work has been done on analyzing values in Iranian high school textbooks (e.g., [Rasti, 2021](#)), these studies are often treated in isolation. There is little focus on EFL textbook content, and most studies adopt limited values without a specific, comprehensive framework.

This gap underscores the importance of research examining the extent to which character values are presented in textbooks and whether these values are violated. This study aimed to examine the extent to which character values are presented in the Iranian high school English textbooks in the *Prospect* and *Vision* series. The study used the character values framework proposed by [Pratiwi et al. \(2021\)](#), one of the few available in this regard. Upon closer analysis, this study also revealed several instances in which the material may unintentionally undermine, or even violate, these important values. Based on these objectives, the study was guided by the following research questions:

Research Question 1: Which character values are represented in the Iranian high school English textbooks *Prospect* and *Vision*, and how frequently do they occur?

Research Question 2: Are there instances in which the textbooks unintentionally undermine or violate certain character values, and if so, which character values are undermined?

Review of the Literature

Textbooks play a pivotal role in shaping learners' values and worldviews, particularly in language education, where the content is closely tied to cultural and moral narratives ([Cunningsworth, 1995](#); [Tomlinson, 2011](#)). As primary tools in classroom instruction, textbooks often serve as a hidden curriculum through which implicit and explicit values are conveyed ([Cortazzi & Jin, 1999](#)). In EFL contexts, especially in countries with centralized education systems like Iran, English language textbooks are typically developed and approved by the

government, e.g., the Organization for Educational Research and Planning in Iran. They typically reflect national ideologies, government policies, moral priorities, and possibly social expectations ([Rasti, 2021](#); [Riazi & Mosallanejad, 2010](#); [Tavakoli & Mehdipour, 2018](#)). Iranian researchers have concluded that textbooks not only transmit linguistic content but also embed religious, cultural, and political orientations that align with national identity goals ([Aliakbari & Allahmoradi, 2014](#); [Amani Eshkaftaki & Asadi, 2025](#)).

Research has shown that ELT textbooks can be instrumental in promoting character values such as empathy, honesty, cooperation, and respect, particularly when narratives, dialogues, and reading passages highlight ethical dilemmas or positive interpersonal behaviors ([Lee & Li, 2020](#); [Pohan & Malik, 2018](#)). However, the degree to which character values are embedded in EFL textbooks varies from context to context. Some studies reveal character values are inconsistently presented or overly implicit, making it difficult for teachers and learners to engage in reflective moral discussions ([Nurjamin & Syafitri, 2021](#); [Sari, 2019](#); [Sunggingwati & Yusuf, 2021](#)). As regards Iranian high school textbooks, [Rashidi & Meihami \(2016\)](#) found that Iranian high school textbooks contain limited references to universal human values and focus more on linguistic structures than content-based character development.

Given their centrality in shaping the classroom experience, ELT textbooks should be intentionally designed to foster moral reasoning and socio-emotional learning alongside language development ([Lickona et al., 2003](#); [Tomlinson, 2011](#)). Moreover, the effectiveness of such textbooks depends on teachers' ability to recognize and utilize these values-based components, making teacher training an essential complement to material development ([Asri & Deviv, 2023](#); [Berkowitz & Bier, 2005](#); [Lovat, 2005](#); [Tajik & Akbari, 2012](#)).

A growing number of studies have examined how character values are reflected in EFL/ESL textbooks. For example, [Hermawan and Noerkhasanah \(2012\)](#) analyzed Indonesian primary school English textbooks and found traces of character values embedded in stories, dialogues, and exercises. These included values such as politeness, cooperation, and care for the environment. Similarly, [Setiawan \(2016\)](#) highlighted that integrating local cultural wisdom into ELT materials can effectively promote moral development while maintaining linguistic goals.

In the Iranian context, [Rasti \(2021\)](#) investigated only one of the six high school English textbooks (*Vision 1*), using a rather general framework focusing on cultural content, and found that although values such as honesty, teamwork, and respect appeared in the said books, they were not systematically or explicitly integrated. The authors argued for a more structured approach to embedding values in line with national educational goals. [Aliakbari and Allahmoradi \(2012\)](#) further emphasized how Iranian ELT textbooks reinforced authority and tradition, often prioritizing obedience over critical reflection. Other international studies, such as [Lee and Li \(2020\)](#) on Chinese textbooks and [Al-Jamal & Younis \(2023\)](#) on Jordanian materials, showed that although many textbooks include character values, they are often

presented in a superficial manner or through hidden curricula rather than through direct instruction ([Al-Jamal & Younis, 2023](#)).

Despite these contributions, some important gaps remain in the existing literature. Most previous studies have focused primarily on identifying the presence of character values, paying limited attention to how textbooks may unintentionally undermine or contradict these values through problematic representations, oversimplified moral dichotomies, or culturally insensitive content. Besides, few studies have adopted a comprehensive, standardized character-value framework that includes universal character values to enable systematic comparisons across textbook series and educational levels. Finally, they did not investigate as many materials as this study.

Method

Design

This study adopted a descriptive research design and sought to find which character values were presented in the Iranian junior and senior high school English textbooks. Quantitative data were gathered through content analysis of the *Prospect* and *Vision* English textbook series, focusing on the frequency and distribution of character values based on the 18 values presented in the checklist by [Pratiwi et al. \(2021\)](#). Content analysis is a data analysis method in qualitative research to make replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful units) to the contexts of their use. It allows the researchers to identify, categorize, and document dominant and underrepresented character values embedded in the materials, and to investigate teachers' perceptions and practices without manipulating the environment. In this study, content analysis was applied to both written and visual forms, requiring particular steps to increase insight ([Krippendorff, 2004](#)).

Instruments and Materials

This study employed multiple data collection instruments to explore the integration of character values in Iranian high school textbooks. Below is a detailed discussion of the materials and the instruments:

Materials

The textbooks, prepared by Iran's Ministry of Education in 2016, are the *Prospect* series (three textbooks covering the three years of junior high school) and the *Vision* series (three textbooks covering the three years of senior high school). Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of each series.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Prospect and Vision Series

	Grade	Number of lessons	Number of pages
Prospect 1	7	8	76
Prospect 2	8	7	88
Prospect 3	9	6	133
Vision 1	10	4	124
Vision 2	11	3	110
Vision 3	12	3	99

Instruments

The character values under scrutiny in this study comprised 18 items from the checklist by [Pratiwi et al. \(2021\)](#), based on the Indonesian educational system. These values include: religiousness, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, patriotism, nationalism, appreciation of achievement, friendliness, love of peace, reading interest, environmental care, social care, and responsibility. This framework was chosen for its clarity, comprehensiveness, and relevance to broader educational goals. Since Indonesia, as an Islamic country where English is taught as a foreign language, is very similar to Iran's setting, the researchers decided to use these proposed character values as the main instrument in their research. The values and their indicators were very consistent with Iran's culture, environment, and educational system. The characters and their explanations, as outlined in the checklist by [Pratiwi et al. \(2021\)](#), are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Character Values and Their Explanations

Character Values	Explanation
Religious	Attitudes and behaviors that obey the teachings of their religion, are tolerant toward the integration of the practice of other religions, and live in harmony with other faiths.
Honest	Behavior based on an attempt to make himself as a person who is always trustworthy in word, action, and jobs.
Tolerant	Attitudes and actions that respect differences of religion, race, ethnicity, opinions, and attitudes of others who are different from themselves. a. Does not bother friends of differing opinions. b. Respect a friend with different customs. c. Make friends with friends from other classes.
Disciplined	Actions show orderly behavior and obey various rules and regulations.
Hardworking	Behaviors indicate a real effort to overcome various barriers in learning and assignments, and to complete the task as well as possible.
Creative	Think and do something to generate new ways or the result of something that has been owned.
Independent	Attitudes and behaviors that make it difficult to depend on others to complete tasks.
Democratic	Ways of thinking, being, attitude, and acting that assess the same rights and obligations of himself and others.

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Character Values	Explanation
Curious	Attitudes and actions that seek to know more deeply and the spread of something learned, seen, and heard.
Nationalist	Ways of thinking, acting, and having knowledge that put the importance of the nation and country above self-importance and group.
Patriotic	Ways of thinking, being, attitude, and acting that show loyalty, caring, and high appreciation toward the language, physical environment, social, cultural, economic, and political nation.
Achievement	Appreciative Attitudes and actions that encourage him to produce something useful for society, and recognize and respect other people's success
Communicative	Actions show a sense of fun when talking, hanging out, and working together with others.
Peace Loving	Attitudes, words, and actions that cause others to feel happy and safe in his presence.
Reading Loving	Habits provide time to read a variety of literature that gives him virtue.
Environmental	Attitudes and actions that seek to prevent damage to the surrounding natural environment and to repair environmental damage that has occurred.
Social Caring	Attitudes and actions have always been to help other people and communities in need.
Responsible	Attitudes and behavior of people to do their duties, he should do, to himself, the community, environment (natural, social, and cultural), the country, and God Almighty.

Data Collection Procedure

This study conducted a systematic content analysis of the *Prospect* (Books 1–3) and *Vision* (Books 1–3) English textbook series used in Iranian junior and senior high schools. These textbooks were selected as the primary materials due to their central role in the national EFL curriculum and their wide usage across Iranian schools. All six textbooks were collected in both physical and digital formats to facilitate thorough review and annotation. Each book was carefully examined, with particular attention given to the main textual elements, including reading passages, conversations, dialogues, tasks, writing prompts, listening activities, and visual content (e.g., illustrations and images that may implicitly convey values). The primary aim was to identify, classify, and quantify the presence of character values derived from the checklist by Pratiwi et al. (2021). The unit of analysis comprised components within each textbook: dialogues, reading passages, exercises, and illustrations. Audio content was also transcribed for analysis, and visual elements were examined for implicit or explicit value representation. To ensure a structured and replicable approach, the content analysis followed Krippendorff's (2004) methodological framework, which includes five core steps: sample selection, unit of analysis, coding, inference, and narration.

- 1. Sample Selection:** The first step involved the purposive selection of materials. Purposive sampling relies on the researchers' judgment to select information-rich materials and on the research objectives (Dornyei, 2007). The *Prospect* and *Vision* series was chosen because they are the nationally mandated resources authored entirely by Iranian experts. These textbooks reflect the Islamic and cultural values embedded within

Iran's educational context, making them well-suited for examining the integration of character values in an EFL setting.

2. **Unit of Analysis:** The unit of analysis varied by textbook structure. In the *Prospect* series, which is more limited in text length, sentences, phrases, dialogues, and visual content served as the primary units. In the *Vision* series, which includes more extensive texts and includes more advanced language, entire paragraphs were also analyzed. Additionally, all audio recordings were transcribed for inclusion in the analysis. Visual elements such as pictures, illustrations, and charts were also examined to determine whether they conveyed values implicitly or explicitly.
3. **Coding:** To facilitate systematic categorization, a coding scheme based on the 18 character values was developed using the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA. Each value was assigned a unique code ranging from 1 to 18. Segments of text or images reflecting these values were extracted and logged into a structured checklist table. This coding process enabled the researchers to quantify and categorize the representation of each character value across all six textbooks.
4. **Inference:** The inference stage involved interpreting the presence and significance of character values in the materials. As [Krippendorff \(2004\)](#) notes, inference bridges the gap between textual content and its broader meaning or implications. In this study, value inference was inherently subjective as some indicators of character values overlapped or appeared in nuanced forms. To address this complexity, researchers collaboratively analyzed the data and crosschecked ambiguous instances to ensure consistency and transparency in interpretation.
5. **Narration:** The final step involved synthesizing and explaining the findings. This involved organizing the frequency data, identifying recurring themes or patterns, and contextualizing the results within the broader scope of character education and language teaching. The results were compiled into comprehensive reports detailing the extent and nature of character value integration in the textbooks.

To enhance the reliability of the content analysis, a second expert in applied linguistics, familiar with this issue, independently recoded a subset of the data. Inter-rater reliability was calculated ($p=0.85$) using Cronbach's alpha to ensure consistency and trustworthiness in the findings. Any discrepancies were resolved through discussion and consensus among the research team, which included one school teacher and two university professors specializing in ELT and curriculum analysis.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data obtained from the content analysis were tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as frequency and percentage distributions, to identify which character values were the most and least frequently present in the textbooks. The results are presented in charts and tables to facilitate comparison and pattern identification across different textbook series

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and grade levels. It is necessary to clarify that in most cases, one item (including word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, image) could represent two or more values, and this overlap was considered and calculated for each of the two or more values.

Results

This section presents the results of the content analysis of character values in the *Prospect* (1-3) and *Vision* (1-3) English textbooks used in Iranian junior and senior high schools. The analysis was based on the 18 character values outlined in the checklist by [Pratiwi et al. \(2021\)](#) and aimed to explore how these values are integrated into the written texts, visual materials, and audio components of the textbooks. Table 3 presents the frequency of each of the 18 character values in *Prospect 1*, *Prospect 2*, and *Prospect 3* across written, visual, and audio formats.

Table 3

Character Values Frequency in Prospect 1–3 (Senior High Schools)

Character Value	Prospect 1			Prospect 2			Prospect 3			Total
	Written	Visual	Audio	Written	Visual	Audio	written	Visual	Audio	
Religious	7	6	0	4	9	1	5	4	0	36
Honest	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	5
Tolerant	1	2	2	2	1	2	8	6	2	26
Disciplined	2	2	0	2	1	0	18	3	0	28
Hardworking	1	9	1	13	10	1	11	7	1	54
Creative	1	0	0	3	3	0	2	1	1	11
Independent	19	0	0	12	0	0	18	0	0	49
Democratic	2	0	0	2	1	0	3	1	0	9
Curious	23	1	11	35	2	8	34	2	3	119
Nationalist	2	4	0	10	13	2	18	13	2	64
Patriotic	1	1	0	2	2	0	4	11	0	21
Achievement	2	2	1	2	2	2	11	5	3	30
Communicative	57	19	1	52	8	0	48	25	1	211
Peace Loving	1	2	0	2	4	0	9	12	0	30
Reading Loving	6	4	0	8	5	1	9	3	0	36
Environmental	1	1	0	1	1	2	2	2	0	10
Social Caring	1	0	0	1	1	0	7	6	1	17
Responsible	3	6	3	5	4	1	28	20	4	74

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A general look at the last column, which shows the total frequency of each value in three books of the series, shows that *communicative* is the most dominant character value across all three textbooks ($f = 211$), particularly in *Prospect 1* (77 instances), *Prospect 3* (74 instances), and *Prospect 2* (60 instances), reflecting the books' emphasis on speaking and interaction. Besides that, it might imply being active in class discussions, receiving and sharing information with classmates, collaborating with peers, and feeling responsible. *Curious* ($f = 119$) and *responsible* ($f = 74$) values also ranked high, with a combined total of over 190 mentions. This reflects the focus on encouraging learners to speak, ask questions, explore, and improve their autonomy. Being curious is necessary because most students are used to following teachers' guidelines and reading books solely, without seeking out or challenging these sources of knowledge. *Hardworking*, *disciplined*, and *responsible values* show a marked increase in *Prospect 3*, likely due to more complex tasks and responsibilities as students advance in their proficiency. *Nationalist* ($f=64$) values are also evidently high but appear more in visual than written content in *Prospect 2*. Values like *Democratic* ($f=9$), *honest* ($f=5$), *creative* ($f=11$), and *Environmental caring* ($f=10$) appear less frequently, suggesting room for more intentional integration of these values in the textbooks. Table 4 illustrates the character value frequency in the *Vision* series (Books 1–3), with the same analysis applied to written, visual, and audio elements.

The following are some samples of *Prospect* series pages. In the picture on the left, Parham's description of his best friend Reza as "clever and kind" and "always very helpful" promotes the character values of caring—showing concern for others—of appreciation for peers' strengths. By presenting kindness and helpfulness as central to being a "great" person, the text implicitly teaches students that moral character and intelligence go hand in hand. The picture in the middle models respectful turn-taking and curiosity. The teacher asks open-ended questions ("Do you have any hobbies, Zahra?"), listens actively and encourages the students to share more. Zahra, in turn, asks her classmate and teacher questions ("And how about you, Mrs. Emami?"). This exchange demonstrates mutual respect, good manners, and active listening, which are all fundamental social-emotional skills in character education. The picture on the right, by encouraging students to "Say your age and spell the number," builds confidence and self-expression — qualities that character education seeks to nurture. Learning to speak up in class, share information about oneself, and communicate clearly in a new language helps children develop self-esteem and responsibility for learning.

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Character value	Vision 1			Vision 2			Vision 3			Total
	Written	Visual	Audio	Written	Visual	Audio	written	Visual	Audio	
Communicative	26	6	1	19	16	0	19	6	0	93
Peace Loving	10	2	4	18	3	1	16	4	0	58
Reading Loving	13	3	1	10	5	1	12	4	0	49
Environmental	26	8	2	1	1	0	20	15	0	73
Social Caring	4	1	0	0	1	0	2	3	0	11
Responsible	16	1	3	17	3	1	17	4	5	67

Communicative (f=93), *disciplined* (f=103), *hardworking* (f=74), and *respect for achievement* (f=89) values dominate across the *Vision* series, reflecting a senior high school focus on academic responsibility and goal orientation. *Environmental Caring* (f=73) is especially prominent in *Vision 1* and *Vision 3*, potentially influenced by global educational trends toward sustainability. *Peace-loving, tolerant, and curious* values are well-present, especially in *Vision 1* and *Vision 2*, showing a deliberate attempt to encourage open-mindedness and inquiry. *Honest* (f=6), *Democratic* (f=5), and *Social caring* (f=11) values are rarely found in the books, indicating a gap in promoting personal initiative and participatory classroom culture. To better understand the broader orientation of Iranian high school English textbooks, a comparative analysis was conducted between the *Vision* (Grades 10–12) and *Prospect* (Grades 7–9) series (see Tables 5 and 6). The fact that *the values of Communicative, Disciplined, Hardworking, and Respect for Achievement are most emphasized in the Vision textbooks mirrors the Iranian educational system’s strong focus on academic success, exam performance, and respect for authority* in the classroom. This pattern shows that Iranian secondary education prioritizes diligence, order, and achievement as indicators of moral and social worth. The notable inclusion of *Environmental Caring*—particularly in *Vision 1* and *Vision 3*—reflects the growing influence of international education frameworks that position ecological awareness as a core component of twenty-first-century citizenship.

Nevertheless, the underrepresentation of *Honesty, Democratic Participation, and Social Caring* values exposes a potential shortcoming in fostering critical autonomy, empathy, and collaborative decision-making. The relative neglect of these interpersonal and civic-minded dimensions may limit students’ opportunities to practice active citizenship, self-expression, and mutual respect within the classroom. Overall, the *Vision* series appears to reflect a developmental shift from the *Prospect* textbooks—used at lower secondary levels—toward a more achievement-oriented and globally responsive framework. While this transition strengthens responsibility and goal orientation, it also underscores the need for a more balanced integration of social and ethical dimensions, including honesty, care, and democracy, which are essential for nurturing socially responsible and communicatively competent global citizens.

Some sample pages containing character values are as follows: In the first picture, Mr. Saberian’s line — “My experience says interest and hard work are really more important than age.” — conveys an important character value: success depends not on innate factors (age, talent, luck) but on effort, perseverance, and motivation. It encourages learners to believe that

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improvement is always possible through dedication. In the picture on the right, the title “Sense of Appreciation” directly signals the lesson's moral focus: cultivating gratitude, respect, and recognition of others’ contributions. By explicitly naming this value, the page helps students associate learning with moral reflection rather than solely cognitive skills.



Table 5

Comparison of Prospect vs. Vision

Character Value	Total Vision	Total Prospect	Stronger Emphasis
Religious	23	36	Prospect
Honest	6	5	Both Low
Tolerant	37	26	Vision
Disciplined	103	28	Vision
Hardworking	74	54	Vision
Creative	47	11	Vision
Independent	34	49	Prospect
Democratic	5	9	Both Low
Curious	67	119	Prospect
Nationalist	83	64	Vision
Patriotic	14	21	Prospect
Respect Achievement	89	30	Vision
Communicative	93	211	Prospect
Peace Loving	58	30	Vision
Reading Loving	49	36	Vision
Environmental	73	10	Vision
Social Caring	11	17	Both Low
Responsible	67	74	Prospect

As shown in Table 5, there are clear contrasts between the two series. *Vision* places much stronger emphasis on discipline, respect for achievement, peace-loving, and environmental care, suggesting a focus on academic rigor and a structured social order. In contrast, *Prospect*, which highlights communicative competence and curiosity, reflects its orientation toward younger learners’ social interaction and exploratory learning. Both series show relatively weak

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integration of democratic values, honesty, and social care, suggesting a broader curricular gap. Table 6 presents a brief comparison of the Prospect and Vision series regarding the distribution of values across their respective dimensions.

Table 6
Comparison: Prospect vs. Vision Series

Dimension	Prospect Series (Books 1–3)	Vision Series (Books 1–3)
Target Level	Junior high school (Grades 7–9)	Senior high school (Grades 10–12)
Religious Values	Present but integrated subtly	Strongly emphasized and often central
Hard Work/Discipline	Frequently present in daily routines	Present through proverbs, biographies, and habits
Tolerance & Diversity	Focus on kindness, greetings, and acceptance	Includes global cultural exposure and empathy tasks
Nationalism	Light cultural references (cities, traditions)	Direct pride in national heroes, landmarks, and culture
Democracy & Peace	Very limited; implicit only	Still limited; mostly missing or underdeveloped
Depth of Values	Surface-level; suited for younger learners	Deeper exploration; some abstract moral reasoning
Language Functions	Basic communication, vocabulary building	Complex themes, critical reflection, moral stories
Creativity & Independence	Emerging; present in drawing or self-expression	Better developed through planning and future-oriented tasks

While the textbooks integrated a range of character values, a closer analysis also reveals several instances where the material may unintentionally undermine or even violate important values. These cases are not necessarily explicit in their negative effect but may carry subtle messages that risk shaping learners’ attitudes in problematic ways. Table 7 below presents these questionable cases in *vision 1*, organized by page/lesson reference, the extract in question, the nature of the potential violation, and the related character value(s) that may be undermined.

Table 7
Possible Violations of Character Values in Vision 1

Page (Lesson)	Example / Extract (from book)	Potential Violation	Related Character Value(s)
p.17 (Lesson 1)	“Which is good for nature? Which is bad?” (cutting trees, hurting animals).	Negative framing of “bad” vs. “good” without nuance. May oversimplify moral complexity.	Critical thinking, responsibility (lacking deeper reflection)
p.24 (Lesson 1)	“Tomorrow I will travel to Africa. I will go to a hot and dry country.”	Simplistic stereotype of Africa (“hot and dry”). Reinforces one-sided view of an entire continent.	Tolerance, Respect for diversity
p.53.67 (Lesson 2)	“Lions are the most dangerous animals... Tigers are as dangerous as lions.”	Promotes fear and danger framing of animals, rather than balanced ecological role.	Peace-loving

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Page (Lesson)	Example / Extract (from book)	Potential Violation	Related Character Value(s)
p.56 (Lesson 2)	Comparative adjectives: “good/bad / better / worse.”	Overemphasis on “bad” / “worse” descriptors when comparing people, things. Risk of reinforcing judgmental language.	Tolerance, respect for diversity
p.57 (Lesson 2)	“Persian zebras are more beautiful than African zebras.”	Promotes nationalistic superiority (Persian vs. African). Risks of ethnocentrism.	Respect for diversity, Nationalism
p.59 (Lesson 2)	Conv. 2 – “Who helps you when you cook? My mother and my younger sister.”	Reinforces gender stereotypes: women/girls as kitchen helpers; no mention of men/fathers cooking.	Gender equality, Responsibility
p.61 (Lesson 2)	Mentions “war” in a neutral context (“draw arrows for intonation practice”).	Using “war” casually as linguistic material can normalize conflict without moral framing.	Peace-loving, tolerant.
p.65 (Lesson 2)	“It’s not. Don’t laugh, please!”	A dismissive tone could reinforce shaming rather than respectful dialogue.	Respect, Communicative
p.67 (Lesson 3)	“Ugly” as part of an adjective comparison exercise.	May foster negative labeling of people/places.	Respect for others, tolerance.
p.79 (Lesson 3)	“He gave up his work without saying anything to us.”	Frames quitting as irresponsible, without context. Reinforces conformity.	Responsibility
p.83 (Lesson 3)	“Tina wasn’t reading a novel... she was studying her English book.”	Suggests novels = less valuable than textbooks. Discourages love of reading for pleasure.	Reading-loving, Creativity
p.87 (Lesson 3)	The storytelling exercise repeatedly includes “poor.”	Risk of reinforcing stereotypes about poverty without critical reflection.	Respect, social care, empathy.
p.103 (Lesson 4)	Adjective practice: “bad” included with “good.”	Normalizing the dichotomy of labeling things/people as “bad.”	Tolerance, respect, fairness.
p.104 (Lesson 4)	A: May I use your camera for my trip? B: Honestly, no. I need it this week. You should buy a camera for yourself.	B’s refusal is honest, but dismissive (“buy one yourself”) → little empathy or cooperation.	Honesty, Empathy, Responsibility
p.107 (Lesson 4)	“We should not say bad things about their food, dresses, or ceremonies.”	While well-intentioned, the phrasing highlights “ bad things ” and risks framing foreign cultures as potentially “bad.”	Tolerance, intercultural respect.
p.117 (Lesson 4)	Grammar drills: “poorly, badly.”	Repeated exposure to deficit-oriented terms.	Respect for achievement, encouragement.
p.119 (Lesson 4)	What you learned – “It is very difficult to find your favorite food when you travel... prices may be high... trips make you tired and weak.”	Framing travel mostly as negative (difficult, unhealthy, tiring). Misses a chance to highlight positive intercultural experiences. It could discourage open-mindedness.	Tolerance, Peace-loving. Curiosity
Throughout	Frequent repetition of “bad” in drills and vocabulary exercises.	Overuse of negative descriptors may subtly normalize deficit-oriented thinking.	Peace-loving, tolerance, empathy.

Tolerance and *respect* were the most frequently undermined values in *Vision 1*, largely due to simplistic moral binaries, stereotypical depictions, and language choices that reinforce judgmental attitudes. *Peace-loving* is weakened when conflict-related terms like *war* appear without a reflective or critical context. Critical thinking and empathy are underdeveloped because dichotomous framing (*good vs. bad*) oversimplifies ethical decisions. The cases mostly show **overreliance on rote learning**, which limits creativity and independence; **individualistic competition** that weakens cooperation and peace-loving; and **shifting responsibility away from students, which** weakens responsibility and environmental care. Exercises such as “Which is good for nature? Which is bad?” or adjective drills contrasting “good/bad” and “better/worse” oversimplify moral complexity and discourage students from engaging in critical thinking or nuanced ethical reasoning. This pattern suggests a didactic approach where morality is presented as absolute rather than reflective, a tendency that [Lickona \(1991\)](#) and [Pala \(2011\)](#) argue weakens students’ capacity for independent moral judgment. Similarly, representations such as “Persian zebras are more beautiful than African zebras” and “I will go to a hot and dry country [Africa]” reflect ethnocentric or stereotypical portrayals that can unconsciously shape learners’ worldviews, undermining tolerance and respect for cultural diversity.

Instances of gender stereotyping—such as depicting only mothers and sisters as responsible for cooking—further limit opportunities for developing equality and shared responsibility, reinforcing traditional social hierarchies instead of promoting inclusive citizenship. Research in gender and education suggests that repeated exposure to stereotypical gender roles in textbooks can normalize unequal social expectations and undermine values such as responsibility, fairness, respect, and democratic participation, which emphasize equality and cooperation among all members of society ([Blumberg, 2008](#); [Sunderland, 2004](#)). Likewise, the use of “dangerous animals” as a neutral language example (first picture from the right), without moral or environmental reflection, weakens peace-loving and environmentally caring values.

Moreover, the frequent presence of deficit-oriented language (“poor,” “bad,” “ugly,” “boring”) and negative framing in reading and grammar activities subtly promotes a deficit mindset, discouraging creativity, confidence, and social care. Iranian students are rarely invited to challenge assumptions, imagine alternatives, or consider emotional consequences—indicating an overreliance on rote learning rather than value-based reasoning. The cumulative effect of these patterns—repetitive moral dichotomies, stereotypical depictions, and teacher-centered framing—risks producing conformity rather than empathy, obedience rather than responsibility, and competition rather than cooperation.

The analysis of *Vision 2* also revealed that while the textbook seeks to incorporate moral and cultural lessons, it contains **recurrent patterns that may inadvertently undermine character development**. Table 8 shows some of the possible violations of character values in *Vision 2*

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Table 8
Possible Violations of Character Values in Vision 2

Page/ Lesson	Example / Passage	Related Character Value(s)	Potential Violation
p. 18 (Lesson 1)	“Number the activities...” (ignores listening to music)	Creativity, Independence	Narrow definition of learning (ignores artistic/creative strategies like music). May undervalue multiple intelligences.
p.20	“My favorite language is absolutely my mother tongue!”	Respect for diversity	Positive in nationalism, but risks reinforcing inwardness over intercultural openness.
p.23 Lesson 1	“We live in an Islamic society.”	Tolerance, Democracy	Presents one identity as absolute. Risks of excluding non-Muslim learners or discouraging pluralism.
p.23 Lesson 1	“Human’s ability to talk makes him different from animals.”	Peace-loving, Responsibility	Gender-biased wording (“him”), anthropocentric. Frames animals as inferior rather than interdependent.
p. 24 Lesson 1	Compares a large group of native speakers of languages vs. “small” ones; learners may conclude some languages are more valuable.	Equality, Respect	Hierarchical view of languages.
p.27 Lesson 1	“Quit/give up” as synonyms	Hard work, Responsibility	Could reinforce negative connotations of “quitting” without nuance.
p.35 Lesson 1	Conv. 1 – Dictionary: focus on “expensive / cheaper” choice.	Simplicity, Respect for Achievement	Overemphasis on price/consumption → reduces learning tools to money value, not knowledge value. Could reinforce materialistic attitudes.
p.35 Lesson 1	Conv. 2 – Buying 15 tickets with a credit card.	Responsibility	Overly commercial/transactional view of interaction. No social dimension (sharing, cooperation, helping others). Risks framing communication only around money.
p.49 Lesson 2	“People with higher education usually live longer.”	Equality, Responsibility	Promotes elitism, risks stigmatizing those without higher education.
p.56 Lesson 2	“Arash has a bad eating habit.”	Respect for others	Labels individuals negatively instead of promoting healthier alternatives.
p.56 Lesson 2	“Addiction to technology... dangerous.”	Balance, Responsibility	Overly moralizing tone, ignores positive uses of technology. It could promote fear rather than balanced literacy.
p.59 Lesson 2	“Praying decreases stress...”	Religious values, Tolerance	Aligns well with Islamic identity, but risks excluding non-religious coping strategies. The picture shows it is related to Islam.
p.64 Lesson 2	“Some haven’t read a book for months... chosen an unhealthy lifestyle.”	Reading-loving, Social care	Overly judgmental framing. Ignores structural reasons (workload, access). They might study online or listen to audiobooks.
p.70 Lesson 2	Conv. 1 – Student quits sports team to “study more.”	Balance, Creativity, Independence	Suggests academics vs. sports as opposites; devalues teamwork/physical activity. It could discourage balance and holistic growth.
p.71 Lesson 2	“Go away.”	Communicative, Peace-loving	Abrupt language models rudeness without offering polite alternatives.

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Page/ Lesson	Example / Passage	Related Character Value(s)	Potential Violation
p.95 Lesson 3	Statement: “If you do not appreciate the value of art, you cannot become successful.”	Creativity, Open-mindedness.	Implies one rigid path to success
p.96 Lesson 3	Example “You’ll hurt yourself if you jump into the river.”	Independence	Only danger-focused examples, no constructive ones. Reinforces fear-based obedience.
p.100 Lesson 3	Conv. 2 – “Science Olympiad.”	Respect for Achievement, Tolerance	Positive encouragement, but highly exam-centered. Risks reinforcing exam success as the only route to recognition; neglects creativity, the arts, and collaboration.
p.107 Lesson 3	What you learned – “Art helps cure diseases... everyone can make artworks.”	Creativity, Independence	Positive value, but an oversimplified claim that “art cures diseases” could misinform students about science/health. Needs nuance.
Across Lessons	Heavy emphasis on rote memorization (grammar, vocabulary drills) with minimal space for creativity or opinion writing.	Creativity, Independence	Limits learner autonomy.

The most frequent concerns in *vision 2* are tolerance, peace, **and respect for others**. A second cluster of issues centers on **creativity and independence**, with the textbook’s heavy reliance on rote drills, exam-oriented success, and materialistic examples leaving little room for critical thinking, self-expression, or holistic growth. This risks promoting a single-mode definition of intelligence, prioritizing cognitive and linguistic skills while neglecting artistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences. Consequently, students may internalize the idea that creativity is secondary to academic conformity, which conflicts with values such as independence, innovation, and balanced growth. Additionally, instances of **consumerism and elitism**—such as equating higher education or wealth with superior status—risk fostering exclusion rather than inclusivity. Overall, these questionable representations highlight the importance of not only embedding positive values but also **avoiding negative or reductionist framings**, which can subtly shape learners’ perceptions in ways that run counter to the goals of character education.

Several passages (p. 20, p. 23, p. 59) present strong cultural and religious orientations. For instance, “We live in an Islamic society,” and the association of stress relief exclusively with prayer might unintentionally exclude or marginalize students from other or non-religious backgrounds. Ideally, religious examples could be supplemented by plural expressions of faith and well-being to support inclusivity. Expressions such as “human’s ability to talk makes him different from animals” (the first picture from the left) reproduce gender-exclusive language (“him”). Inclusive, gender-neutral, and environmentally aware language would better align with current values education principles. Several lessons (e.g., “If you do not appreciate art, you cannot become successful,” p. 95; “Science Olympiad,” p. 100) equate success with specific

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paths or achievements—artistic or academic. This creates a fixed and exclusive notion of success, limiting the value of diverse talents. A more inclusive framing would emphasize that success is multifaceted, including collaboration, empathy, and community contribution.

Table 9
Possible Violations of Character Values in Vision 3

Page /Lesson	Example	Character Value(s) Concerned	Possible violation
p.21 (Lesson 1)	“Hamid sits on the sofa and watches TV all the time.”	Hard work, Responsibility	Negative stereotyping (“lazy couch potato”). Reinforces ridicule instead of encouraging balance between rest and activity.
p.21 (Lesson 1)	“Dad really shouted at me when I didn’t do my homework.”	Respect, Peace-loving	Models harsh discipline as normal since any other advice did not precede it. Suggests shouting = acceptable parent–child interaction.
p.23 (Lesson 1)	“Aida burst into tears when she saw her score.”	Emotional well-being, Self-respect	Emphasizes exam anxiety/humiliation. Risks of reinforcing unhealthy pressure about grades.
p.29, 31 (Lesson 1)	“Ali broke the window yesterday.” / “The boys have broken the window.”	Responsibility	Focus on blame rather than problem-solving. Promotes accusatory framing instead of repair/restoration.
p.33 (Lesson 1)	Conv. 2 – Mina: “Honestly, I like less active sports like chess.”	Discipline, Health	Devalues physical health by presenting inactivity as preferable, which could normalize a sedentary lifestyle among teens.
p.37 (Lesson 1)	“That dictionary is expensive...”	Equality, Respect for knowledge	Equates learning resources with monetary value. Highlights financial inequality.
p.38 (Lesson 1)	“My brother has a lot of books. He never reads them.”	Reading-loving	Negative framing of literacy. Suggests owning books without reading = normal.
p. 38 (Lesson 1)	“We should do a lot of homework. We don’t have enough time.”	Balance, Well-being	Reinforces the burden of study, not the joy of learning. Could create stress.
p.41 (Lesson 1)	What you learned – Dr. Asadi: “Elders have more knowledge and wisdom than any one of us.”	Respect for elders, Critical thinking, Independence	Positive respect message, but absolute framing (“more than any one of us”) risks discouraging questioning or critical reflection; reinforces hierarchy over independent thought.
p.50 (Lesson 2)	“Mehran couldn’t figure out what the teacher was talking about.”	Critical thinking, Confidence	Normalizes lack of understanding without encouraging strategies. It could discourage struggling learners.
p. 54 (Lesson 2)	Sharks/snakes passage (p.54)	Peace-loving, Respect for nature	Fear-based framing of animals (“dangerous killers”). Overemphasizes threat instead of ecological balance.
p. 60 (Lesson 2)	“They would be healthier if they lived in a village.”	Respect for diversity, Social care	Idealizes one lifestyle and devalues urban life. Oversimplified comparison.

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Page /Lesson	Example	Character Value(s) Concerned	Possible violation
p. 62 (Lesson 2)	Conv. 1 – Zohreh did not invite Mina because she had moved.	Tolerance, Inclusiveness, Social care	Suggests excluding people based on distance; weakens inclusivity and friendship values.
p. 79 (Lesson 3)	“The factory replaced most of its workers with robots.”	Social justice, Responsibility	Depicts job loss without empathy. Missed a chance to discuss the dignity of labor.
p. 84 (Lesson 3)	“One or two strong leaders are needed.”	Democracy, Collaboration	Promotes an authoritarian idea of leadership. Risks discouraging teamwork and shared leadership.
p. 90 (Lesson 3)	Conv. 2 – Museum of Holy Defense visit.	Peace-loving, Tolerance	Framing only military history as cultural heritage may promote nationalism/war memory rather than peace-building; risks a one-dimensional worldview.
p. 85 (Lesson 3)	“Cut your coat according to your cloth.”	Creativity, Independence	Rigid proverb use without nuance. May discourage ambition or innovative thinking.

In *Vision 3*, the most frequent potential violations were linked to **tolerance, peace-loving, and respect for diversity**, often arising through stereotyping (e.g., portraying urban life, introversion, or foreign cultures negatively) and fear-based framing (e.g., of animals or strangers). A second cluster relates to **reading, creativity, and independence**, where learning is sometimes framed as boring, rigid, or overly exam- or discipline-focused, discouraging intrinsic motivation and critical thinking. Several examples (e.g., “Hamid sits on the sofa and watches TV all the time,” picture in the middle) rely on simplistic moral framing that distinguishes “good” and “bad” behaviors through ridicule or blame. Such examples implicitly promote discipline and responsibility but do so by stigmatizing rather than educating. The “lazy couch potato” trope, for instance, reinforces a negative stereotype rather than modeling balanced time management or healthy leisure. This moralistic framing risks cultivating fear-based compliance rather than intrinsic responsibility. The excerpts “Dad really shouted at me...” (the picture in the middle) and “Aida burst into tears when she saw her score” (p.23) illustrate emotional and relational tensions presented without supportive guidance. In both, emotional distress or harsh discipline is portrayed as normal. While intended to show the consequences of not fulfilling duties, these examples may inadvertently normalize shouting or shame in family and school relationships. While these instances may seem minor in isolation, taken together, they highlight subtle but consistent tensions between the intended character education goals and the implicit messages students may absorb.

The following are some sample pages from the *Vision Series* containing character value violation:

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The data presented in Table 10 revealed several recurring patterns in *Prospect 1* that may unintentionally undermine certain character values.

Table 10
Possible Violations of Character Values in Prospect 1

Page / Lesson	Example / Content	Potential Violation	Related Character Value(s)
p. 22 (Lesson 4)	Student dialogue: “ <i>She’s 35. She is a housewife.</i> ”	Reproduces traditional gender role (woman = housewife) as normative; lacks representation of women in diverse occupations.	Gender equality (implicit), Independence, Responsibility, Social caring
p. 25 (Lesson 4)	“ <i>She’s a nurse.</i> ” / “ <i>He’s a teacher.</i> ”	Occupational roles follow traditional gender patterns without variation.	Equality, Independence, Responsibility
pp. 28–31 (Lesson 5)	Appearance and comparison exercises (<i>tall/short, old/young</i>)	Encourages categorization based on physical appearance without explicit emphasis on respect or anti-discrimination; risk of stereotyping.	Respect, Tolerance, Communicative
p. 29 (Lesson 5)	Appearance vocabulary (<i>chador, manteau, scarf</i> , etc.)	Presents a single national/religious mode of dress as the default, without contextualizing the diversity of dress choices; may limit tolerant discussion.	Tolerance, Respect for diversity, Religious (context sensitivity)
p. 32 (Lesson 6)	Conversation: “ <i>Mom: I’m in the kitchen.</i> ” “ <i>Dad: in the garage... fixing the car.</i> ”	Clear gendered division of domestic vs. technical roles; reinforces stereotyped responsibilities.	Gender equality, Independence, Responsibility

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Page / Lesson	Example / Content	Potential Violation	Related Character Value(s)
p.35 (Lesson 6)	“He’s cooking dinner!” (marked as surprising)	Male domestic role framed as unusual (“wow, interesting”).	Gender Equality, Responsibility
pp. 38–39 (Lesson 7)	Address/telephone role-plays focusing on conventional family routines	Limited representation of diverse family structures constrains inclusivity and social awareness.	Social caring, Tolerance, Communicative
pp. 45–46 (Lesson 8)	Food-related practice: “ <i>I’m hungry... Let’s have...</i> ”	Missed opportunity to discuss food diversity, food security, or respectful dietary differences; may implicitly favor mainstream foods.	Tolerance, Social caring, Environmental care
pp. 58–61 (Photo dictionary)	Occupations and gendered role pairings (e.g., <i>mother–housewife</i>)	Occupational portrayals skew toward conventional gender roles; limited visibility of women in diverse professions and men in domestic roles.	Equality, Independence, Social caring
Photo dictionary (daily actions)	Actions such as <i>cooking, washing, and fixing</i> are grouped in gender-typical ways	Reinforces gendered expectations for household vs. technical tasks.	Gender equality, Responsibility, Independence
food pages	“Favorite food” activities assume availability and choice	Neglects ethical dimensions of food access, sustainability, and inequality.	Environmental care, Social caring, Responsibility
Throughout book	Repetitive Q&A, photo-dictionary labeling, formulaic dialogues. Vocabulary and short dialogs with minimal ethical reflection	Overreliance on rote practice; values remain implicit. Values are presented in a lexical rather than a reflective or participatory format.	Curious, Creative, Independent, Democratic, Honest, Responsible, Respect for achievement

The analysis showed that the textbook relies heavily on rote learning strategies, including repetitive question–answer patterns, photo-dictionary labeling, and formulaic dialogues. While these techniques may support basic language acquisition, their dominance limits learners’ engagement in higher-order thinking, reflection, and participatory interaction. Consequently, values such as curiosity, creativity, democracy, responsibility, and respect for achievement are presented mainly at a lexical or descriptive level, rather than being actively practiced or examined through problem-solving tasks, discussions, or role-play. One of the most salient patterns concerns the **representation of gender roles**. Dialogues such as “She’s 35. She is a housewife” and occupational pairings like “She’s a nurse” versus “He’s a teacher” reproduce traditional gender-role associations without offering counterexamples. Similarly, domestic and technical activities are consistently divided along gender lines, with women depicted in kitchens and men engaged in mechanical or outdoor tasks. Even when male participation in domestic work is shown, as in “He’s cooking dinner,” the expression is framed as surprising, implicitly marking such behavior as atypical. These patterns may weaken the values of **gender equality, independence, and shared responsibility**, as they normalize traditional social hierarchies rather than encouraging students to view roles as flexible and equally accessible.

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Also, lessons focused on physical descriptions and comparisons (e.g., tall/short, old/young) emphasize labeling individuals based on visible traits without explicit guidance on respectful language or diversity awareness. When such descriptors are presented repeatedly and without critical framing, they may contribute to stereotyping or judgmental attitudes, thereby limiting the development of **tolerance, respect for others, and empathetic communication.**

Table 11 reveals possible undermined values in Prospect 2.

Table 11
Possible Violations of Character Values in Prospect 2

Lesson/Section	Value Undermined	Explanation
Lesson 1: p. 12	Tolerance	The dialogue emphasizes Iranian origin and pride in Iran without acknowledging or positively referencing other cultures (e.g., France, where Sam lives), potentially minorly undermining tolerance by implying exclusivity to Iranian identity.
Lesson 1: p.16	Tolerance, Intercultural Respect	Nationality labeling (French, Spanish, Brazilian). Cultural identities reduced to nationality labels; no deeper intercultural discussion.
Lesson 3: p. 30	Gender Equality, Independence	“I’m good at cooking...” (female student) Cooking presented as female-typed ability; limited counterexamples.
Lesson 4: p.34	Independence	The teacher takes full control in helping the sick student (by calling parents and talking to another teacher), without encouraging student self-reliance, and mildly undermines independence by promoting dependency on authority figures.
Lesson 4: p.37	Responsibility, Independence	Parents always resolve school problems. Shifts responsibility from the student to adults.
Lesson 5: p. 42	Environmental Caring	Descriptions of cities like Isfahan focus on buildings and cleanliness but ignore environmental issues (e.g., pollution or conservation), thereby undermining environmental care by failing to raise awareness.
Lesson 5: p.46	Critical Thinking, Curiosity	Cities described mainly as “old”, “big”, “holy”. Cultural depth simplified; promotes surface-level nationalism.
Lesson 6: p.52	Democracy	Group activities are teacher-directed, with no student voting or collective decision-making on topics, which undermines democracy by failing to model participatory processes.
Lesson 7: p.54-57	Hard Work	Hobbies emphasize leisure (watching movies, reading for fun, going to the gym) without linking to productive or effort-based activities, slightly undermining hard work by prioritizing relaxation over diligence.
Lesson 7: page 57	Social Caring, Democratic Participation	Hobbies focus on individual leisure. Limited cooperative or social action activities.
Overall Textbook	Honesty, Love of Peace	Complete absence of scenarios or discussions involving truthfulness or ethical dilemmas, which could undermine honesty by not reinforcing it as a key value in interactions. No references to peace, conflict resolution, or anti-violence themes in any dialogues or practices, slightly undermining the love of peace by neglecting it in social interactions.

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The findings presented in the table indicated that *Prospect 2* generally promotes positive social and educational values, but in several lessons, some character values are implicitly weakened or underrepresented rather than explicitly violated. Most of these issues stem from omissions, limited perspectives, or stereotypical representations, rather than direct negative messages.

One recurring concern relates to tolerance and intercultural respect. In early lessons, national identity is emphasized strongly, while references to other cultures remain superficial or limited to nationality labels. This approach may unintentionally promote a narrow understanding of cultural diversity and reduce opportunities for meaningful intercultural awareness. Similarly, descriptions of cities and cultures often remain at a surface level, which limits the development of curiosity and critical thinking about cultural differences. In addition, hard work and social caring are occasionally overshadowed by a strong focus on leisure activities and individual hobbies. While relaxation is important, the absence of links to effort, perseverance, or community involvement may reduce students' understanding of these values as part of everyday life.

Finally, the absence of honesty and peace-loving themes across the textbook represents a notable gap. Without scenarios involving ethical dilemmas, truthfulness, or conflict resolution, students have limited exposure to these essential character values within the language-learning context.

Table 12 below lists possible violations of character values in Prospect 3.

Table 12

Possible Violations of Character Values in Prospect 3

Page(s)	Example / Content	Potential Character Value Limitation	Related Character Value(s)
pp. 16 Lesson 1	Descriptions of personality traits (e.g., clever, kind, hardworking) in dialogues about best friends	Focuses on secular personality traits without linking them to religious or faith-based moral dimensions common in Iranian-Islamic character education	Religious
p. 25 Lesson 1	“Iran is a great country... people are brave and hardworking.”	Strong positive national portrayal without balance or critical reflection.	Nationalism (uncritical), Critical Thinking
p. 30 Lesson 2	Hotel receptionist welcoming a foreign tourist (Paul from Germany); passport dialogue	Emphasizes openness to foreign visitors without parallel discussion of cultural boundaries or national identity	Tolerance
p. 50 Lesson 3	Norooz is portrayed as leisure-focused (visits, gifts, fun, decorating, coloring eggs)	Emphasizes celebration and relaxation with limited reference to effort, productivity, or responsibility	Hardworking

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Page(s)	Example / Content	Potential Character Value Limitation	Related Character Value(s)
pp. 57 Lesson 3	A passage about Fitr Eid focusing on prayer and ceremony	Omits broader ethical or environmental caring dimensions (e.g., charity, social responsibility, nature)	Environmental Caring
pp. 64 Lesson 4	An Iranian boy helping a foreign tourist buy a postcard	Positive intercultural interaction, but framed without reciprocal cultural exchange	Tolerance
pp. 68–71 Lesson 4	Police and firefighter dialogues focusing on public service	Secular portrayal of service roles without linking duty to ethical motivation	Religious
p. 82 Lesson 5	Media use (TV, internet, film festival attendance)	Leisure-oriented media use is not balanced with productive or effort-based activities	Hardworking
p. 83 Lesson 5	Internet use, downloading, connecting online	No reference to digital responsibility, sustainability, or environmental impact	Responsibility Environmental Caring
pp. 92–93 Lesson 5	Card questions and pair/group discussion about media habits	Limited focus on individual critical evaluation of media use	Independent
pp. 96 Lesson 6	Injury and first-aid dialogues (e.g., Helal-e-Ahmar classes)	Focus on technical responses without coping or moral reflection	Responsibility
p. 102 Lesson 6	Story of a child injured due to impulsive behavior	Emphasizes accident outcome without linking prevention to diligence or responsibility	Hardworking
pp. 98–99 Lesson 6	Injury vocabulary and examples	Lack of attention to environmental safety or preventive responsibility	Environmental Caring
pp. 119– 122 Photo Dictionary	Images of ceremonies and parades	Collective events are shown as top-down observances without participatory elements	Democratic
pp. 125– 127 Photo Dictionary	Media-related images (interview, blog, antivirus)	No emphasis on ethical or honest digital behavior	Honest
pp. 128– 130 Photo Dictionary	Images of accidents and injuries	Visual focus on harm without peace-promoting or non-violent framing	Peace loving
Throughout	Absence of scenarios emphasizing truthfulness or ethical honesty. Teacher-led activities, controlled pair/group work	Lack of explicit modeling or reinforcement of honesty in social interactions. Limited opportunities	Honest, Democratic, peace-loving, Independent

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Page(s)	Example / Content	Potential Character Value Limitation	Related Character Value(s)
	No explicit peace-related themes beyond routine family visits Strong emphasis on family/group reliance in tasks	for learner decision-making, voice, or participatory choice Peace and conflict resolution are not directly addressed Limited encouragement of individual initiative or self-reliance	

Tolerance and intercultural respect, independence, responsibility, environmental caring, democracy, hard Work, honesty, and love of peace were mostly undermined in *Prospect 3*. Early lessons strongly emphasized Iranian identity and nationality. While this builds patriotism, the lack of positive engagement with other cultures may subtly limit broader tolerance. Also, teachers and parents were shown as primary helpers/solvers, which reinforces respect for authority (positive), but offers little modeling of student self-reliance. Classroom activities were teacher-led, and hobbies leaned toward leisure, without balancing with participatory decision-making or productive effort. Descriptions of places focused on beauty and history but rarely addressed modern issues like pollution or encouraged deeper analysis. Honesty and love of peace were not actively taught or illustrated through scenarios, representing a missed opportunity rather than promotion of opposites.

Discussion

The results revealed that religious values were moderately embedded across all six textbooks. Texts often begin with Quranic verses or Islamic proverbs, such as “Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave” (*Vision 1*), or “God helps those who help themselves” (*Vision 3*), which emphasize faith, gratitude, and the spiritual importance of learning and action. *Prospect 3* includes content about *Eid al-Fitr*, references to the Quran, and students discussing prayer, while *Prospect 1* introduces Islamic clothing such as the *chador*. Compared to the *Vision* series, these values are less thematically central and more interwoven with cultural identity. This reflects an age-appropriate strategy of socializing learners into religious identity through familiar contexts ([Amani Eshkaftaki & Asadi, 2025](#)).

These inclusions reflect Iran's theocratic educational system, where Islamic beliefs and practices form a cornerstone of national identity ([Riazi & Mosallanejad, 2010](#)). The strong integration of religious values supports [Lickona's \(1991\)](#) model of moral education, which emphasizes the role of spiritual development in ethical character formation.

Vision textbooks also show moderate attention to *tolerance* and *respect for diversity*. Units like “Traveling the World” and “Languages of the World” in *Vision 1* and *Vision 2* promote understanding of different cultures, languages, and lifestyles. For example, the statement “We should respect all languages, no matter how different they are” explicitly supports linguistic and cultural tolerance (*Vision 2*).

These aspects align well with [Kramsch's \(1993\)](#) advocacy for intercultural competence in ELT and reflect a growing awareness of the global dimension of English as a lingua franca ([Baker, 2012](#)). They also help foster empathy and openness among learners, which are essential for 21st-century citizenship ([UNESCO, 2015](#)). Yet, as [Hermawan and Noerkhasanah \(2012\)](#) argue, these representations are often implicit and lack deeper moral reflection or critical discussion. While the presence of these values is encouraging, their integration tends to focus on surface-level politeness rather than fostering intercultural empathy or socio-emotional awareness, a gap also noted by [Nurjamin and Syafitri \(2021\)](#). However, *tolerance* was the most frequently undermined value in the *Vision* series. Particularly in passages that promote stereotypes, body shaming, or oversimplified cultural representations (*vision 2*), or the use of words like *ugly*, *poor*, and *bad* risks promoting negative stereotyping (*vision 1*)

Curiosity appears frequently in both series, especially in the *Prospect* books, through questions and visual prompts such as dictionaries, "What's this called?", and classroom object identification. This reflects early learner strategies and inquiry-based learning and supports the work of [Lickona \(1991\)](#), who argues that curiosity fosters both intellectual and moral growth.

The *Prospect* series frequently emphasizes *discipline* and *hard work* through routines (e.g., waking early, doing homework, helping parents), especially in *Prospect 2* and *3*. Phrases like "She always studies hard," and narratives of persistence (e.g., climbing a chair twice to get a cookie) promote persistence and self-discipline. Additionally, *responsibility* is embedded in everyday tasks: students are shown fixing things, helping with chores, or visiting sick friends. These small but meaningful representations support Lickona's (1991) notion that moral action can be nurtured through habitual behavior.

Discipline is promoted through the *Vision* series related to healthy living, time management, and planning for the future. The character value of *hard work* is reinforced through motivational sayings and biographies of scientists, athletes, and historical figures. Examples such as "No success is possible without hard work," or the story of Edison's 1,000 failed experiments, highlight perseverance as key to achievement. Similarly, national pride is cultivated through references to Iranian landmarks, wildlife, handicrafts, and historical figures (e.g., Razi, Hafez, Avicenna).

These materials foster a practical sense of personal agency—students are prompted to set goals, make responsible decisions, and consider the long-term effects of their actions. Such progression aligns with [Cortazzi and Jin's \(1999\)](#) assertion, and [Lickona's \(1991\)](#) three components of character education: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. However, the textbooks focus more heavily on "knowing" and "feeling," with fewer structured activities guiding students toward "action."

National pride and cultural belonging are gently woven throughout the *prospect* series. Discussions about cities, holidays like *Nowruz* and *Yalda*, and Iranian customs (e.g., setting the Haft Seen table) serve to affirm cultural values. Such content contributes to the *nationalist* and *patriotic* character values. This is important in building identity and aligning with Iranian

curriculum goals ([Aliakbari & Allahmoradi, 2014](#)). *Vision 1* and *3* highlight national symbols (e.g., Ferdowsi, Persian lions, Iranian geography). These narratives reflect the findings of [Aliakbari and Allahmoradi \(2012\)](#), who found that Iranian textbooks often affirm cultural identity through heritage and achievements.

Yet, the balance between local and global identity is inconsistent. While *Vision 2* makes commendable efforts to portray global linguistic diversity, democratic engagement with the global community—especially regarding democracy, peace-building, and human rights—is notably underrepresented. This echoes [Lovat \(2005\)](#) and [Arthur \(2003\)](#), who caution against universalist frameworks that overlook cultural specificity.

Despite these strengths, some character values are either weakly presented or absent. Notably, *honesty*, *democratic values*, *independence*, *creativity*, and *peace-loving* values are underdeveloped. While *democracy* is hinted at through tasks that involve choices (“Which one do you prefer?” or “Order based on interest”), it lacks explicit discussion of fair decision-making, cooperation, or civic engagement. The development of autonomous thinking remains basic, often constrained to rote exercises rather than encouraging critical thinking or problem-solving. This may reflect an instructional emphasis on functional language use rather than higher-order skills. Tasks that involve choosing or expressing preferences exist, but they do not foster in-depth decision-making, civic engagement, or peaceful conflict resolution.

Peace-loving is often implied (e.g., polite speech, cooperative activities), but there's no direct mention of resolving conflict, promoting non-violence, or development through scenario-based exercises and reflective tasks. These findings echo critiques in prior analyses of Iranian textbooks (e.g., [Riazi, 2003](#)), where social harmony is promoted without encouraging participatory citizenship.

This gap suggests an imbalance in the moral framework of the textbooks. While they emphasize obedience and pride, they do less to prepare students for participatory citizenship or global peacebuilding. This reflects a challenge noted by [Aliakbari and Allahmoradi \(2012\)](#), who observed that Iranian textbooks often support authority and tradition over critical thinking and democratic participation. This echoes the critique by [Afriani \(2019\)](#), and [Asri and Deviv \(2023\)](#), who argue that character values in textbooks often remain tokenistic. The emphasis on obedience in Iranian textbooks may unintentionally suppress more participatory or critical values—potentially stifling the very capacities needed for democratic citizenship or moral agency.

The findings of this study raise critical questions about the superficiality and structural limitations of character education within the Iranian EFL context. Although character values are nominally present in the *Vision* and *Prospect* textbooks, their presentation is often implicit, fragmented, or reduced to generic moral slogans. Such tokenistic representations fail to provoke critical thinking or foster deep internalization of ethical values ([Afriani, 2019](#)). [Afriani \(2019\)](#), and [Asri and Deviv \(2023\)](#) critique the instrumental and perfunctory inclusion of values in

educational content. Textbooks continue to prioritize linguistic competence and examination preparation, relegating character development to a secondary concern—if not an afterthought.

Even more critically, the reliance on the 18-character-value checklist by [Pratiwi et al. \(2021\)](#)—while useful for comparative analysis—raises concerns regarding cultural transferability. This framework, though comprehensive, was not originally developed with Iranian sociocultural values in mind. The results show that while some values (e.g., respect, responsibility) overlap with Islamic ethical teachings, others are less resonant or may be interpreted differently in the Iranian context. This raises the question: Should character education frameworks be imported wholesale, or adapted through local philosophical and cultural lenses? As [Lovat \(2005\)](#) and [Arthur \(2003\)](#) argue, culturally grounded ethics must be integrated into the pedagogical fabric if values are to be internalized rather than merely acknowledged.

Conclusion

The *Prospect* and *Vision* textbooks reflect a developmental progression in character education. Early books focus on social behaviors and routines (e.g., communication, discipline), while later materials introduce more abstract or societal themes (e.g., responsibility, environmentalism). Yet, the integration of values remains uneven, with certain domains (e.g., democracy, honesty) underdeveloped.

Without structured reflection, scenario-based dilemmas, or guided discussions, the potential of these textbooks to shape moral reasoning remains limited. Previous research has shown that values embedded implicitly in materials are often insufficient for promoting ethical understanding unless they are supported by pedagogical mediation ([Lickona et al., 2003](#)). A more intentional approach—combining explicit instruction, culturally responsive content, and teacher training—is essential to transform EFL classrooms into spaces of holistic education ([Lovat, 2005](#); [Nurjamin & Syafitri, 2021](#); [Pala, 2011](#)).

In conclusion, character education in English language teaching should not be regarded as an optional or secondary element. It is a foundational component of holistic education—essential for nurturing responsible, reflective, and morally grounded global citizens ([Cates, 1997](#)). By integrating character values into teaching materials and equipping teachers with the necessary tools and support, the Iranian educational system can move closer to realizing its goal of cultivating students who are not only linguistically competent but also ethically conscious and socially engaged ([Berkowitz & Bier, 2007](#); [Davidson et al., 2008](#)).

These findings suggest several implications for ELT practice and curriculum design in Iran. Curriculum developers should aim for a more balanced representation of all character values, especially democratic participation and peace education, to promote comprehensive moral development. Teacher training programs should include modules on integrating character education into ELT, with strategies for using textbook content as a springboard for values-based discussion. Classroom tasks should be expanded to include more critical thinking, role-playing,

and group decision-making activities to reinforce values like cooperation, empathy, and problem-solving. These steps can support language teaching in line with the holistic goals of national education policy and global standards for moral and civic learning. If character education is to be effective in EFL contexts, it must go beyond content inclusion and be supported by teacher beliefs, pedagogical strategies, and institutional policies ([Berkowitz & Bier, 2005](#)). However, these implications should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, the study focused primarily on textbook content, which may not fully capture how character values are actually enacted in classroom practice. Second, the qualitative nature of the analysis restricted the generalizability of the findings to broader EFL contexts. Future research could expand by examining the long-term impact of character-integrated language instruction on students' behavior and attitudes. Comparative studies between Islamic and non-Islamic contexts could also deepen understanding of how cultural and religious values influence the implementation of character education in ELT.

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