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Soft-Skill Representation in *Jordan High Note 10* EFL Textbook Activities

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Abstract The integration of soft skills into school curricula is a central objective of competency-based education. In EFL contexts, textbooks can provide instructional opportunities associated with cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal competencies. This study examined soft-skill representation in the newly prescribed *Jordan High Note 10* textbooks using an adapted, P21-informed analytical framework. Quantitative content analysis was conducted on the Student's Books and Workbooks for both semesters across seven domains: effective communication and active listening, critical thinking and problem-solving, collaboration and teamwork, empathy and perspective-taking, adaptability and creativity, cultural awareness, and time management. Instructional opportunities were associated with all seven domains, although their distribution was uneven. Collaboration and teamwork were most prominent, followed by critical thinking and problem-solving, while cultural awareness was least represented. Overall, cognitive and interactional domains were more visible than intercultural, socio-emotional, and self-management domains. The study provides a baseline account of soft-skill representation without treating textbook frequency as evidence of competency development or classroom implementation.

Keywords: *21st-century skills, Content analysis, EFL textbooks, Education, Soft skills*

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1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, educational systems worldwide have increasingly shifted from traditional knowledge-based education toward competency-based education aimed at preparing learners for contemporary social, academic, and professional demands. Globalization, technological advancement, evolving labor markets, and increasingly complex social environments have intensified attention to competencies that extend beyond disciplinary knowledge and enable learners to communicate effectively, collaborate, solve problems, and adapt to changing circumstances (OECD, 2018; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Among these broader competencies, soft skills have received increasing attention from educators and policy-makers. Soft skills encompass cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal

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competencies that support effective communication, collaboration, problem-solving, adaptability, lifelong learning, employability, and social participation (Heckman & Kautz, 2012; Robles, 2012). Their relevance is particularly evident in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, where language learning inherently involves communication, interaction, cultural understanding, and the negotiation of meaning. EFL classrooms therefore provide natural opportunities for engaging learners in critical thinking, collaboration, empathy, intercultural awareness, and problem-solving alongside linguistic development. Because textbooks remain a primary source of instructional content and learning activities in many EFL contexts, the topics, tasks, and participation structures they provide offer a tangible means of examining how broader educational priorities, including soft skills, are represented in instructional materials.

Research examining soft skills in educational materials has generally shown that their representation is uneven. Studies conducted in Jordan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Indonesia, and other contexts have reported that although soft skills are included in English language textbooks, some competencies, particularly communication and critical thinking, tend to receive greater emphasis than interpersonal, socio-emotional, and intercultural skills (Abu Siba'ah & Al-Hadidi, 2018; Al Jar, 2021; Al Masri et al., 2016; Bani Amer & Khataybeh, 2022; Rakhmawati & Priyana, 2019). This issue has particular relevance in Jordan, where recent educational reforms have involved substantial revisions to curriculum frameworks and instructional materials. As part of these reforms, the Ministry of Education introduced the *Jordan High Note* series to replace the long-established Action Pack textbooks. The new series was developed within a broader effort to align educational practices with contemporary standards and prepare learners for the demands of the twenty-first century. Textbooks occupy a critical position in this process because they mediate between intended curriculum objectives and the learning opportunities made available to learners. Their content can therefore provide evidence of how competency-based priorities are represented in instructional materials, although such representation cannot in itself establish how those opportunities are enacted in classrooms or whether learners ultimately develop the competencies concerned.

Despite the growing body of research on soft skills in EFL textbooks, important gaps remain. Existing studies in Jordan have focused primarily on the Action Pack series and other previously prescribed materials (Abu Siba'ah & Al-Hadidi, 2018; Alghazo, 2024; Bani Amer & Khataybeh, 2022). While these studies have generated valuable insights into the inclusion of life skills and 21st-century competencies, they do not address the newly introduced *Jordan High Note* series. Furthermore, previous investigations have tended to identify the presence of particular skills rather than examine the overall pattern and distribution of multiple soft-skill domains within a comprehensive analytical framework. No study identified in the literature reviewed for the present study has systematically examined the representation of soft skills in *Jordan High Note 10* using the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) as an analytical foundation. The present study addresses this gap by examining the frequency and distribution of seven soft-skill domains across the Student Books and Workbooks. In doing so, it provides empirical evidence of how competency-oriented priorities are represented in Jordan's newly prescribed Grade 10 EFL materials without treating their frequency as evidence of competency development or successful classroom implementation. The study was guided by the following research question:

1. To what extent are the seven soft-skill domains (i.e., effective communication and active listening, critical thinking and problem-solving, collaboration and teamwork, empathy and perspective-taking, adaptability and creativity, cultural awareness, and time management) represented in *Jordan High Note 10*?
2. How are the seven soft-skill domains distributed across the *Jordan High Note 10* textbook series?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Soft Skills and Education

Soft skills are broadly defined as cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal competencies that enable individuals to communicate effectively, collaborate with others, adapt to changing circumstances, and manage personal and professional responsibilities (Heckman & Kautz, 2012; Robles, 2012). Although

the concept has been described using various labels, including life skills, transferable skills, employability skills, and twenty-first-century skills, these terms generally refer to competencies that extend beyond disciplinary knowledge and support success across educational, professional, and social contexts (Cimatti, 2016; Schulz, 2008).

In this study, soft skills are used as the overarching term for transferable cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal abilities that support effective performance across educational, social, and professional contexts. Twenty-first-century skills refer more specifically to configurations of such abilities within contemporary competency frameworks, including P21. Competencies are used as the broader construct encompassing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions mobilized in particular contexts. Communicative competence, by contrast, refers specifically to the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in social and cultural interaction. These constructs therefore overlap but are not treated as interchangeable.

Recent scholarship increasingly treats soft skills as developable and context-dependent rather than fixed personal attributes. Their significance extends across educational, professional, and intercultural settings, where effective performance depends on interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies alongside technical or linguistic knowledge (Cimatti, 2016; Heckman & Kautz, 2012; Robles, 2012; Succi & Canovi, 2020). This perspective is particularly relevant to language education because communicative competence extends beyond grammatical knowledge to the socially and culturally appropriate use of language (Deardorff, 2020; Jackson, 2020; Taguchi & Roever, 2020). Al Abdwani (2026) develops this argument further by positioning soft skills as integral to communicative competence while emphasizing that their salience and manifestation are culturally situated. His framework incorporates dimensions such as active listening, empathy, collaboration, perspective-taking, adaptability, and cultural awareness, reinforcing the view that soft skills should be examined as interconnected competencies whose expression depends partly on communicative and cultural context.

Empirical research on soft-skills representation in EFL textbooks has expanded considerably in recent years, with studies generally examining the extent to which instructional materials reflect competency-based educational objectives. Research conducted in Jordan has consistently reported that soft skills are present in English language textbooks but are not systematically integrated. Recent content-analytic research on Jordanian EFL textbooks has reached similar conclusions regarding the uneven representation of broader educational competencies. For example, Qublan and Bataineh (2025) reported that global citizenship concepts were present but unevenly distributed across textbook content, suggesting that the inclusion of contemporary educational priorities does not necessarily guarantee their systematic integration within instructional materials. This observation reinforces the importance of examining not only whether competencies are represented but also how consistently they are embedded across learning opportunities. Studies of the Action Pack series found that cognitive and communication-related competencies received greater emphasis than interpersonal, socio-emotional, and intercultural skills, while considerable variation was observed across skill domains (Abu Siba'ah & Al-Hadidi, 2018; Al Masri et al., 2016; Bani Amer & Khataybeh, 2022).

Similar patterns have been reported in other contexts. Studies conducted in Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Indonesia found that soft skills and twenty-first-century competencies were incorporated into EFL instructional materials but were unevenly distributed across domains and learning activities (Al Jar, 2021; Rahate Ellah & Azmi, 2023; Rakhmawati & Priyana, 2019). This pattern is consistent with broader international research on competency-based education and twenty-first-century skills. Comparative analyses indicate that educational systems frequently endorse comprehensive competency development while placing greater emphasis on cognitive and academic competencies than on socio-emotional, intercultural, and self-management skills (Binkley et al., 2012; Voogt & Roblin, 2012). Moreover, research on instructional materials suggests that the inclusion of competencies in curriculum frameworks does not necessarily result in balanced representation in textbooks (Al Jar, 2021; Qublan & Bataineh, 2025; Rakhmawati & Priyana, 2019). These observations highlight the importance of examining not only whether competencies are present but also how they are distributed across learning opportunities and which competencies receive sustained curricular emphasis. Collectively, these studies

suggest that the inclusion of soft skills in textbooks does not necessarily ensure balanced representation or systematic competency development.

Methodologically, previous studies have also differed substantially in the competencies examined and the coding frameworks employed. Jordanian analyses of *Action Pack* have variously focused on life skills, communication, cognitive competencies, and broader twenty-first-century domains (Abu Siba'ah & Al-Hadidi, 2018; Bani Amer & Khataybeh, 2022), while international studies have ranged from analyses of the 4Cs to more extensive competency-based taxonomies (Al Jar, 2021; Rakhmawati & Priyana, 2019). These differences make direct frequency comparisons difficult, but a consistent pattern emerges across contexts: soft-skill opportunities tend to be unevenly distributed, with cognitive and communicative domains often more visible than socio-emotional, intercultural, or self-management competencies. The present study therefore extends previous work by applying one explicit seven-domain framework to the newly prescribed *Jordan High Note 10* activities.

2.2. Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21)

Of the several frameworks developed to define 21st-century competencies, P21 remains one of the most influential and widely adopted. Developed in response to the evolving demands of contemporary society, the framework promotes an educational model that merges academic content with essential life and career skills. The P21 framework focuses on four core competencies commonly known as the "4Cs": communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2007). These competencies are seen as fundamental for success in educational, professional, and social contexts. Beyond the 4Cs, the framework also highlights the importance of interpersonal, intrapersonal, and self-management skills that support learners' ability to navigate complex environments.

The framework has had a significant impact on curriculum development because it provides a comprehensive structure for assessing the extent to which competencies are represented in instructional materials. Many studies examining soft-skills representation in educational materials have adopted P21 because of its comprehensive conceptualization of contemporary competencies and its applicability across educational contexts (Binkley et al., 2012; Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2007; Voogt & Roblin, 2012). This same framework has consequently guided a growing body of empirical research that applies its principles to evaluate actual classroom materials. Previous textbook analyses used P21 either as a comprehensive framework or through selected components, particularly the 4Cs of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. Rakhmawati and Priyana (2019) found that twenty-first-century skills were broadly but unevenly represented in an Indonesian EFL textbook, while Rinekso (2021) identified 12 of the 15 P21 skills, with communication and collaboration particularly prominent. Boukersoul and Sadoune (2024) similarly reported uneven representation in Algerian EFL textbooks, with learning and innovation skills more evident than technological literacy. More recently, Çağlar-Cana and Savaşçı (2026) found considerable variation in the representation of the 4Cs across Turkish high-school English coursebooks. Together, these studies support the use of P21 in textbook analysis and point to uneven representation across competency domains.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study used a descriptive quantitative content analysis design to examine the representation and distribution of soft skills in *Jordan High Note 10* textbooks. The approach was chosen because it enables researchers to examine the extent to which educational resources provide identifiable instructional opportunities associated with specific competencies and to determine patterns in their distribution across textbook content (Krippendorff, 2018).

3.2. Corpus

The corpus comprised the first edition (2025) of the four learner-facing *Jordan High Note 10* volumes prescribed by the Jordanian Ministry of Education for the 2025/2026 academic year: *Jordan High Note 10 Student's Book, Semester One*; *Jordan High Note 10 Workbook, Semester One*; *Jordan High Note*

10 Student's Book, Semester Two; and *Jordan High Note 10 Workbook, Semester Two*, published by The National Center for Curriculum Development (NCCD). The Semester One volumes cover Units 1–5 and the Semester Two volumes cover Units 6–10. Teacher's Books, digital resources, assessment materials, and supplementary course components were excluded.

Grade 10 was selected because it was the first secondary-school level at which the newly prescribed High Note series was introduced, making it an appropriate corpus for establishing a baseline of soft-skill representation in the new materials. The present study examines these prescribed instructional materials only and does not evaluate curriculum-policy implementation or the success of the broader reform process. To investigate this representation systematically, a fine-grained content analysis was conducted on all instructional activities within the selected textbooks.

Activities were selected because they constitute the practical component of textbook content through which learners engage with language and encounter instructional opportunities associated with related competencies. The instructional activities included exercises, discussion prompts, listening and speaking tasks, reading-related tasks, writing assignments, collaborative activities, projects, role-plays, and reflective tasks. Each activity was evaluated independently against the operational criteria for all seven domains through a coding framework. Coding was criterion-based rather than mutually exclusive. An activity was assigned to a domain only when its explicit instruction, required learner action, or expected output met the operational indicators for that domain. Where an activity explicitly satisfied the criteria for more than one domain, each qualifying domain was recorded. This procedure was adopted because textbook tasks can simultaneously provide instructional opportunities associated with multiple competencies.

3.3. Coding Framework and Operational Definitions

Although P21 provides the conceptual foundation for the study, the seven domains represent an operational adaptation for EFL textbook analysis rather than a direct reproduction of P21 categories. Effective communication and active listening derive from P21 communication; critical thinking and problem-solving, and collaboration and teamwork correspond to the respective 4Cs; and adaptability and creativity draw on creativity together with flexibility and adaptability. Empathy and perspective-taking, and cultural awareness reflect P21 Social and Cross-Cultural Skills, while time management draws on Productivity and Accountability and Initiative and Self-Direction. The seven domains were selected for their relevance to EFL learning and their observability in textbook activities. Other P21 components, particularly information, media, and technology literacy, were excluded because the study focused on soft-skill opportunities in learner-facing language activities. This operational adaptation necessarily informed how related constructs were later combined into coherent instructional domains. Related constructs were combined only where they formed coherent instructional domains that could be distinguished through explicit coding indicators. Communication and active listening were grouped around the exchange and reception of meaning, adaptability and creativity around flexible or open-ended responses, and empathy and perspective-taking around explicit consideration of another person's experience, feelings, or viewpoint.

To ensure coding consistency, each domain was operationally defined through observable indicators. Coding decisions were based on the explicit instruction, required learner action, and expected output of each activity rather than on its topic or incidental features. An activity was coded for each domain whose operational criteria it explicitly satisfied. Thus, pair or group format alone did not establish collaboration unless cooperation or shared task completion was required, while cultural or emotional content was not coded as cultural awareness or empathy and perspective-taking unless the activity required learners to engage explicitly with cultural meaning or another person's experience, feelings, or viewpoint. The same principle guided all coding judgments, ensuring that every domain was assessed strictly by the presence of explicit demands rather than implicit themes.

To distinguish incidental references from identifiable instructional opportunities, only activities that explicitly required learner actions corresponding to a target competency were coded. Mere topic presence was not considered sufficient evidence of skill inclusion. For example, cultural content was coded as cultural awareness only when learners were required to engage with cultural understanding,

comparison, reflection, or interpretation. Similarly, social or emotional content was coded as empathy and perspective-taking only when the activity explicitly required learners to consider, interpret, or respond to another person's feelings, experience, or perspective.

Collaborative skills were coded only when activities required interaction, cooperation, or shared task completion rather than individual work completed alongside peers. Time management was coded only when an activity explicitly required learners to plan, allocate, prioritize, or manage time or task completion; routine sequencing or the mere presence of multiple task stages was not considered sufficient. The operational definitions and indicators used in the coding process are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Operational Definitions and Indicators for Soft-skill Domains

Domain	Operational Indicators
1. Effective Communication and Active Listening	Exchange of information, dialogue, summarization, clarification, listening for key ideas
2. Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving	Analysis, evaluation, inference, prediction, solution generation
3. Collaboration and Teamwork	Pair work, group discussion, role-play, project-based activities
4. Empathy and Perspective-Taking	Explicit consideration of alternative viewpoints, interpretation of others' feelings or perspectives, perspective-taking, or responses requiring learners to consider another person's experience
5. Adaptability and Creativity	Open-ended responses, imaginative expression, hypothetical thinking, flexible language use
6. Cultural Awareness	Cultural traditions, diversity, intercultural understanding, sociolinguistic appropriateness
7. Time Management	Explicit planning or prioritization of tasks, allocation or management of time, scheduling, deadline-related decisions, or learner-directed organization of task completion

The coding framework was designed to capture competencies derived from or aligned with the P21 framework and operationalized for direct observation within EFL instructional activities. Collectively, the seven domains encompass cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dimensions of soft skills and provide a comprehensive framework for examining competency representation across the textbook series. Illustrative examples showing how selected textbook activities were coded against these operational criteria are provided in Appendix A.

The coding framework underwent expert review by six specialists in curriculum and instruction, educational measurement, and English language teaching. The specialists were selected for their disciplinary expertise relevant to textbook analysis, competency-based education, and EFL pedagogy. They reviewed the proposed domains and indicators for clarity, relevance, comprehensiveness, conceptual overlap, and alignment with the study objectives. Their feedback was used to refine category descriptions, clarify operational definitions, and reduce overlap between domains. The procedure constituted qualitative expert judgment; no quantitative content-validity index was calculated.

To assess coding reliability, a pilot corpus comprising one selected unit from each textbook was independently coded using the full seven-domain framework. For intra-coder reliability, the researcher recoded the same pilot material after a two-week interval, yielding Cohen's $\kappa = .87$. For inter-rater reliability, a second rater independently coded the complete pilot corpus across all seven domains, yielding Cohen's $\kappa = 0.89$. Disagreements were reviewed against the operational definitions and resolved before final coding.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

The four textbooks were reviewed systematically on a page-by-page basis. Each instructional activity was identified and evaluated against the seven soft-skill domains according to the established coding framework. The coding process was conducted manually using a coding sheet developed specifically

for the study. A total of 851 instructional activities were identified across the four *Jordan High Note 10* volumes, comprising 524 activities in the Student Books and 327 in the Workbooks. Each activity was evaluated against the seven soft-skill domains, and an activity could contribute to more than one domain when its explicit instructional demands satisfied the operational criteria for more than one competency. The analysis yielded 742 soft-skill coding occurrences across the corpus, comprising 642 occurrences in the Student Books and 100 in the Workbooks. Some screened activities did not meet the criteria for any of the seven domains, whereas some qualifying activities met the criteria for more than one domain; therefore, the total number of coding occurrences was not expected to equal the number of activities screened. Accordingly, the denominator used in calculating the percentages reported for the seven domains was the total number of coded soft-skill occurrences rather than the total number of textbook activities screened.

Following the coding process, frequencies and percentages were calculated for each soft-skill domain to determine its relative representation within the textbook series. Percentages were calculated by dividing the frequency of each domain by the total number of soft-skill coding occurrences (n = 742). Accordingly, the reported percentages describe the relative distribution of the seven domains among qualifying activities and should not be interpreted as the percentage of all textbook activities containing a particular soft skill. Percentages were computed using the following formula:

Percentage = (Frequency of Domain ÷ Total Frequency of All Domains) × 100

The results were presented in tables and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The analysis focused on identifying patterns of inclusion, determining which domains accounted for the largest and smallest proportions of coded occurrences, and examining the overall distribution of soft-skill opportunities across the Student Books and Workbooks. These findings served as the basis for describing the representation and distribution of soft-skill domains in *Jordan High Note 10*. The analysis was exclusively descriptive; no inferential statistical tests or hypothesis testing were conducted because the study examined the complete textbook corpus rather than a sample from which population-level inferences were sought.

4. Results

4.1. Overall Representation of Soft Skills in *Jordan High Note 10*

The analysis of the 851 instructional activities yielded 742 soft-skill coding occurrences across the seven domains. Because coding was criterion-based rather than mutually exclusive, an activity could contribute to more than one domain when it satisfied the relevant operational criteria. Instructional opportunities associated with all seven soft-skill domains were identified, although their frequency and relative prominence varied. Table 2 presents the distribution of soft skills in the Student Book.

Table 2
Representation of Soft Skills across Jordan High Note 10 Student Book

Domain	n	%
Effective Communication and Active Listening	69	10.7
Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving	143	22.3
Collaboration/Teamwork	163	25.4
Empathy and Perspective Taking	67	10.4
Adaptability and Creativity	62	9.7
Cultural Awareness	65	10.1
Time Management	73	11.4

n=642

As shown in Table 2, collaboration and teamwork accounted for the largest proportion of coded soft-skill occurrences (25.4%), followed by critical thinking and problem-solving (22.3%). By contrast, adaptability and creativity (9.7%), cultural awareness (10.1%), and empathy and perspective-taking (10.4%) accounted for comparatively smaller proportions of coded occurrences. These findings indicate

a greater relative frequency of opportunities associated with interactional and cognitive competencies than with intercultural and socio-emotional competencies in the Student Book.

Table 3
Representation of Soft Skills across Jordan High Note 10 Workbook

Domain	n	%
Effective Communication and Active Listening	16	16
Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving	13	13
Collaboration/Teamwork	14	14
Empathy and Perspective Taking	16	16
Adaptability and Creativity	15	15
Cultural Awareness	6	6
Time Management	20	20

n=100

As shown in Table 3, all seven domains were represented in the Workbook. Time management accounted for the largest proportion of coded occurrences (20%), followed by effective communication and active listening and empathy and perspective-taking (16% each). Cultural awareness accounted for the smallest proportion of coded occurrences (6%). Compared with the Student Book, the Workbook displayed a more balanced distribution across domains, although time-management opportunities occurred noticeably more frequently than cultural-awareness opportunities.

Because the Student Books yielded substantially more coded soft-skill occurrences (n = 642) than the Workbooks (n = 100), the percentages for each component are reported separately in Tables 2 and 3 to permit comparison without conflating differences in corpus size. Table 4 then presents the combined distribution across the full corpus; these overall percentages should be interpreted with recognition that they are necessarily weighted toward the Student Books because of their larger number of coded occurrences.

Table 4
Overall Representation of Soft Skills across Jordan High Note 10

Domain	n	%
Effective Communication and Active Listening	85	11.5
Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving	156	21.0
Collaboration/Teamwork	177	23.9
Empathy and Perspective Taking	83	11.2
Adaptability and Creativity	77	10.4
Cultural Awareness	71	9.6
Time Management	93	12.5

Note. n=742. Percentages may not total 100.0 due to rounding.

Table 4 shows that collaboration and teamwork accounted for the largest proportion of coded soft-skill occurrences (23.9%), followed by critical thinking and problem-solving (21.0%). Cultural awareness accounted for the smallest proportion (9.6%). These percentages describe the distribution of the 742 coded soft-skill occurrences and should not be interpreted as percentages of all textbook activities containing a particular competency. This distributional pattern, however, reflects aggregated data across the entire textbook series rather than a semester-by-semester breakdown. The analysis did not disaggregate frequencies by semester because its focus was the representation of soft skills across the Grade 10 series as a whole and across its two instructional components, the Student Books and Workbooks.

For ease of presentation, the seven coded domains are discussed below in three broader descriptive groupings: cognitive and communicative competencies (effective communication and active listening; critical thinking and problem-solving), interpersonal and intercultural competencies (collaboration and teamwork; empathy and perspective-taking; cultural awareness), and adaptability, creativity, and self-management (adaptability and creativity; time management). These groupings were not separately coded; the operational definitions and indicators are those of their constituent domains reported in Table 1.

4.2. Cognitive and Communicative Competencies

Effective communication and active listening accounted for 11.5% of all coded occurrences, while critical thinking and problem-solving accounted for 21.0%. The latter was therefore the second-largest proportion of coded occurrences across the full corpus. These findings indicate differences in the relative frequency of instructional opportunities associated with communicative and cognitive competencies.

4.3. Interpersonal and Intercultural Competencies

Collaboration and teamwork accounted for the largest proportion of coded soft-skill occurrences (23.9%). Empathy and perspective-taking accounted for 11.2%, while cultural awareness accounted for the smallest proportion (9.6%). The results therefore indicate substantially more frequent opportunities associated with collaboration than with the socio-emotional and intercultural domains examined.

4.4. Adaptability, Creativity, and Time Management

Adaptability and creativity accounted for 10.4% of coded soft-skill occurrences, while time management accounted for 12.5%. Both occurred less frequently than collaboration and critical thinking and problem-solving.

5. Discussion

In response to the research questions, the findings showed that all seven targeted soft-skill domains were represented across the textbook series, although their frequencies varied considerably. Collaboration and teamwork and critical thinking and problem-solving accounted for the largest proportions of coded occurrences, whereas cultural awareness, adaptability and creativity, and empathy and perspective-taking occurred less frequently. Viewed collectively, the findings suggest that activities associated with cognitive engagement and classroom interaction occur more frequently than those associated with intercultural, socio-emotional, and time management competencies. This distribution provides evidence of the relative visibility of different soft-skill domains within the textbook activities, but it does not establish a hierarchy of curricular priorities or demonstrate that more frequently represented competencies are developed more effectively.

Collaboration and teamwork accounted for the largest proportion of coded soft-skill occurrences. This indicates that opportunities associated with collaboration were comparatively more common than opportunities associated with the other domains, but it does not establish the depth or quality of collaboration learners may experience in classroom practice. The pattern may partly reflect the participation structure of contemporary EFL materials, where pair and group tasks provide natural vehicles for language use while simultaneously creating opportunities for shared task completion. The prominence of collaboration therefore appears consistent with both communicative language teaching and the interactional design of many textbook activities. This prominence is consistent with communicative approaches to language teaching, in which interaction plays a central role in language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This result is also consistent with the broader emphasis on collaboration within the P21 framework (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2007).

Instructional opportunities associated with critical thinking and problem-solving were also comparatively frequent. Viewed through the P21-informed framework, its comparatively high frequency indicates that cognitive competencies account for a comparatively large share of the soft-skill opportunities identified in the materials. In *High Note 10*, this may reflect the frequency of activities requiring learners to analyze information, justify responses, draw conclusions, or generate solutions rather than simply retrieve linguistic information. This pattern is consistent with previous research identifying critical thinking as one of the more frequently represented soft skills in EFL instructional materials (Abu Siba'ah & Al-Hadidi, 2018; Bani Amer & Khataybeh, 2022). The prominence of critical thinking and problem-solving is also consistent with previous analyses of Jordanian EFL materials, which have frequently reported stronger representation of cognitive than socio-emotional competencies (Abu Siba'ah & Al-Hadidi, 2018; Bani Amer & Khataybeh, 2022).

Effective communication and active listening accounted for 11.5% of the coded soft-skill occurrences. At first sight, this proportion may appear unexpectedly modest given the communicative orientation of EFL materials. The finding should be interpreted in light of the coding procedure, however. Communication was recorded only when an activity explicitly required communicative behaviors such as information exchange, turn-taking, clarification, summarization, or attentive listening. Many activities involving language use simultaneously created opportunities for other competencies and were therefore coded for those domains as well. The detailed coding further shows that communication opportunities were concentrated largely in listening-for-gist and summarization or clarification tasks, while explicitly reciprocal communicative-feedback activities were comparatively rare. The 11.5% figure therefore does not imply that communication was absent from the remaining activities. Rather, it indicates the proportion of all coded soft-skill occurrences that met the study's explicit operational criteria for effective communication and active listening. More broadly, previous Jordanian textbook analyses have also reported uneven representation across communication-related and other soft-skill domains (Abu Siba'ah & Al-Hadidi, 2018; Al Masri et al., 2016; Bani Amer & Khataybeh, 2022).

Empathy and perspective-taking accounted for 11.2% of coded soft-skill occurrences and were less frequently represented than collaboration, critical thinking and problem-solving, and communication and active listening. Under the coding framework, activities were classified in this domain only when they explicitly required learners to consider another person's experience, feelings, or viewpoint. The finding therefore indicates comparatively fewer explicit perspective-taking opportunities within the materials, rather than evidence concerning learners' actual development of empathy or socio-emotional competence. This comparatively lower representation of socio-emotional competencies is consistent with previous Jordanian textbook analyses (Abu Siba'ah & Al-Hadidi, 2018; Bani Amer & Khataybeh, 2022).

Cultural awareness was comparatively less frequent than collaboration and critical thinking. Under the coding framework, cultural awareness encompassed activities requiring engagement with cultural traditions, diversity, intercultural understanding, or sociolinguistic appropriateness. The presence of such opportunities should not be equated with the development of intercultural competence or critical cultural awareness. The findings therefore indicate opportunities for cultural engagement within the materials rather than evidence that learners develop intercultural competence through them. The present findings suggest that *Jordan High Note 10* incorporates cultural content within its broader competency-oriented design, while leaving scope for more frequent activities requiring learners to interpret, compare, and critically engage with cultural perspectives. The comparatively low frequency of cultural-awareness opportunities is consistent with recent analysis of Jordanian EFL instructional materials, in which globally oriented competencies were present but not consistently foregrounded across learning activities (Qublan & Bataineh, 2025).

Adaptability and creativity accounted for 10.4% of coded occurrences and were therefore comparatively less frequent. Under the coding framework, this domain required open-ended, imaginative, hypothetical, or flexible responses, suggesting that such task demands were comparatively less frequent in the materials. This pattern is consistent with the uneven representation of twenty-first-century competencies reported in other EFL textbook analyses (Al Jar, 2021; Rakhmawati & Priyana, 2019).

Time management accounted for 12.5% of coded soft-skill occurrences, placing it above cultural awareness (9.6%), adaptability and creativity (10.4%), and empathy and perspective-taking (11.2%). Activities were coded for time management only where they explicitly required planning, prioritization, allocation or management of time, scheduling, deadline-related decisions, or learner-directed organization of task completion. Routine sequencing and the mere presence of multiple task stages were not treated as evidence of time management. The findings therefore indicate a modest but clearly identifiable number of explicit time-management opportunities within the materials. This finding is noteworthy given the growing emphasis on learner autonomy and self-regulation in contemporary language education. Research in the Jordanian EFL context has similarly highlighted the importance of self-regulation and independent learning for language development (Salman & Bataineh, 2025). The comparatively modest representation of time management is also consistent with broader work indicating less emphasis on self-management than on cognitive competencies (Binkley et al., 2012;

Voogt & Roblin, 2012). More explicit opportunities for planning and managing task completion could therefore provide more frequent opportunities for self-management within the series.

Within the context of Jordan's recent curriculum reform, these findings provide evidence that soft skills are represented in the new Grade 10 EFL materials. They do not, however, establish the extent to which the reform has succeeded in developing these competencies among learners. Such judgments require evidence from classroom implementation, teacher practices, and learner outcomes beyond textbook content. What the findings do offer, instead, is a systematic baseline of how these soft skills are distributed within the prescribed materials themselves. The study contributes a systematic examination of the newly prescribed *Jordan High Note 10* Student's Books and Workbooks using an explicit operational coding framework. By establishing a baseline distribution of soft-skill representation in these materials, the findings provide a basis for curriculum developers and textbook designers to identify domains for which additional instructional opportunities may be warranted and for teachers to supplement domains for which textbooks provide comparatively fewer instructional opportunities. The study also provides a baseline for subsequent comparisons across grade levels, textbook components, and later editions of the series.

The study has several limitations. First, it examined the frequency and distribution of soft-skill representation rather than the quality, depth, or pedagogical effectiveness of individual activities. Second, because coding identified explicit instructional opportunities, the resulting frequencies should not be interpreted as evidence of competency development. Third, the analysis was limited to the Student's Books and Workbooks and did not examine Teacher's Books, digital resources, assessment materials, or classroom implementation. Finally, frequencies were not disaggregated by semester, so the study does not capture possible changes in competency representation across the academic year. These limitations, however, directly point to productive avenues for further investigation. Future research could build on the present study by examining how teachers implement textbook activities in their classrooms, investigating students' perceptions of soft-skills development, comparing patterns of representation between semesters, and extending the analysis across different grade levels and subject areas. Such research would provide a more complete picture of the relationship between competency representation in instructional materials and classroom practice.

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Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Ethics Declaration

This study involved analysis of textbook materials; therefore, ethical approval and informed consent were not required.

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Appendix A

Illustrative Coding of Selected Jordan High Note 10 Activities

Source	Activity	Domain(s) coded	Coding rationale	Domains not coded
Student's Book, Semester 1, Unit 1, p. 4, Ex. 1	How do you think the people in the photo feel? Why do you think that?	Empathy and Perspective-Taking; Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving	Requires learners to infer another person's feelings and justify their interpretation.	Effective Communication and Active Listening; Collaboration and Teamwork; Adaptability and Creativity; Cultural Awareness; Time Management
Workbook, Semester 1, Revision 1, p. 11, Ex. 6	In pairs, take turns to ask and answer the questions.	Effective Communication and Active Listening	Explicitly requires reciprocal questioning, responding, turn-taking, and listening.	Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving; Collaboration and Teamwork; Empathy and Perspective-Taking; Adaptability and Creativity; Cultural Awareness; Time Management
Student's Book, Semester 2, Life Skills, p. 36, Ex. 3	In small groups, choose one of the problems below and brainstorm possible solutions. Be as creative as you can.	Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving; Adaptability and Creativity; Collaboration and Teamwork	Requires joint problem-solving, generation of alternative solutions, creative thinking, and a shared task outcome.	Effective Communication and Active Listening; Empathy and Perspective-Taking; Cultural Awareness; Time Management
Workbook, Semester 2, Revision 9, p. 35, Ex. 7	In pairs, imagine you are on a backpacking trip. You have just arrived at a hostel. You both like different things. Decide together what to do on your trip.	Collaboration and Teamwork; Adaptability and Creativity; Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving	Requires a shared decision, engagement with a hypothetical situation, and evaluation of alternatives arising from different preferences.	Effective Communication and Active Listening; Empathy and Perspective-Taking; Cultural Awareness; Time Management

Note. Each activity was evaluated against all seven soft-skill domains using the operational definitions and indicators reported in Table 1. A domain was coded only when the activity's explicit instruction, required learner action, or expected output met the relevant operational criteria. Accordingly, an activity could receive more than one domain code or no code.