

**A Comparative Study of Life Skills in the Young  
Adult Novels of Erich Kästner and Farhad Hassanzadeh**

Hamid Rezaei, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Persian Language and Literature,  
Payam-e Noor University

Sajad Najafi Behzadi, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Persian Language and Literature,  
Shahrekord University

**Introduction**

For entering society, children and adolescents need to learn some skills that help them face life's challenges and problems. Life skills program is one of the individual-focused strategies that enhances people's tolerance and increases their capacity to deal with challenges, conflicts and hardships of everyday life and protects them against these problems. Accordingly, we need to employ life skills such as decision-making skills, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, self-awareness, communication, anger management, etc., to deal with our environment. We need to find the most appropriate approach to get the highest efficiency. Pittman defines life skills as abilities, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors that are taught for achieving happiness and success in life. These skills enable people to adapt to their situations, and through the development of these skills, people learn

to lead a comfortable life with others and to feel safe (Kaveh, 2012: 32, quoting Pittman, 1997). The aim of this study is to investigate life skills in the novels of Farhad Hassanzadeh and Erich Kästner, two authors of children's literature in Iran and Germany, in order to delineate which skills are more frequent in the works of these two authors.

### **Research Methodology and Review of Literature**

This essay uses quantitative and qualitative analysis of the content of the two authors' works. In the quantitative analysis of the content of works, the focus is on the frequency of an analytical unit such as a word, and in a qualitative study, data and tests are analyzed to discover the meaning of the text (Sarukhani, 2003: 287).

No research has been done on the subject of life skills in the young adult novels of Erich Kästner and Farhad Hassanzadeh; however, there are some studies about the subject in other works:

Nahid Karimi and her colleagues (2017) in their article, "The effects of life skills on the creativity of elementary students by the use of storytelling", came to the conclusion that teaching life skills through storytelling enhances the creativity of elementary students.

Saeed Hesampour and his colleagues (2015) try to show how the meaning of life is reflected in their article, "A comparative study and an analysis of the reflection of the meaning of life in *Three people in the snow* by Erich Kästner and *Thirty men and thirty birds* by Akbar Sahraei".

Maryam Omidinia and her colleagues (2013) focus on the life skill of critical thinking in their article, "A study of critical thinking skills in selected Persian adolescent novels of the 1980s".

### **Discussion**

Life skills are more frequently used in Hassanzadeh's novels. Among Hassanzadeh's novels, *Call me Ziba* presents life skills more frequently than others. Empathy skills are used more frequently than other skills in the novels of the two authors. Skills such as critical thinking, creative thinking and problem solving have a lower frequency. They appear even less in Kästner's works than in Hassanzadeh's. Focusing on empathy skills increases empathy and intimacy between the characters of the story and the readers; and this intimacy is later expanded to the family and the community; nevertheless, it is important to note that skills such as problem solving, decision making and critical thinking are essential in teaching children and adolescents how to deal with life problems. Thinking is the language of the mind, and critical thinking enables people to analyze, deduce, evaluate, and draw conclusions. Critical thinking provides the grounds for reasonable decision-making. From the age of seven, children compare their experiences with new findings.

### **Conclusion**

In the novels of the two authors, empathy skills are more frequent while critical thinking, creative thinking and problem solving are less frequent.

Life skills are more frequently used in Farhad Hassanzadeh's works than in Erich Kästner's works. In Kästner's works, child and adolescent characters use the skill of critical thinking, while in Hassanzadeh's works, this skill is usually used by adult characters. Among the novels analyzed, the two novels *Call me Ziba* and *Strange sisters* display the use of problem-solving and empathy skills more than other works. In Hassanzadeh's novel *Hasti*, the skill of empathy has a very high frequency compared to other works. *Hasti* is a teenage girl whose meaningful connection and empathy with Uncle Jamshid can be significant for the audience.

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