The Relationship of Socio-Economic Status and Achievement of Learners in English as a Subject at Secondary Level in Pakistan

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Abstract *In Pakistan English is taught as a compulsory subject in private as well as public schools form primary till university level. Resulting in the different outcomes by different socio-economic status student. The current study attempts to study the correlation between socio-economic status and their achievement in the subject of English using survey method. The data was collected through simple random sampling technique. Data was collected 162 students through questionnaire. The descriptive and Pearson correlation were used for data analysis. The results revealed that the students whose parents having managerial category had a high correlation with all the four (sentence, grammar, vocabulary and spelling) skills of English learning. Whereas, students from the unskilled and semiskilled families resulted in a low achievement in English.*

Introduction

Many researchers have indicated that the background experience and knowledge of students from the upper socio-economic classes about language are more valuable than those students who belong to the lower economic background. The understanding and experiences of learners who belong to the middle economic class are the big help for them to learn speedily (Henry 1963). Social-background, social class and socioeconomic status (SES) are all the terms used to define a sociological and a financial sum of anyone's experience and a person's or ancestry's financial and societal positioning in the society to compare with all those whose base is on education, their income and profession. Hamid (2011) agreed on this and stated that when we are investigating a family's social-background, socioeconomic status or social class, the family's total income; education and occupation of the earners are analyzed as a whole. Lareau and Weininger (2008) divided the socioeconomic status, social-background and social class into three divisions; high, middle and low.

The existing literature gives the evidence that the social background, social class or socioeconomic status of a student has an impact on his learning. Numerous studies support and conclude this hypothesis like a study organized by Letts, Edwards, Sinka, Schaefer and

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Gibbons (2013) and concluded that learners from low socio-economic status families are
slow in learning of academic skills and language acquisition as compare to learners from upper socioeconomic status families. They further stated that learners with disadvantaged socioeconomic status are correlated with deprived cognitive growth, language, memory, and socio-emotional regulation. Aikens, Coleman and Barbarin (2008) give the importance of school systems and state low socioeconomic status families afford schools which have poor structural facilities they have not enough resources which negatively affect children's academic achievement and process of language acquisition, Similarly Rouse and Battle and Lewis (2002) concluded that children of the high social class scored more than an average test score and as well as they never hold back a grade when we compare these students with low social class or low socioeconomic status families. These results are also given support by a study conducted by Kormos & Kiddle (2013). According to Farooq, Chaudhry and Shafiq (2011), background variables of a family such as socioeconomic status significantly affect student's academic achievement and language learning. They further explained that learning achievement of students is deeply related to their home environment. Children of educated parents flourish in an environment which is suitable for their academic success and the parents with good qualification creates a conducive environment for their children to learn in a better way. Learners are directly affected by their parents' socio economic status as is supported by the researchers Arshad, Attari and Elahi (2012). This argument is further supported by Jernim (2009) who concludes that the provision of learning facilities to students is the main job of parents which can only be possible if they have a strong economic status. A report forwarded by the Department of Education and Training Australia (2010) highlights the differences of learning between the privileged family children and the under privileged children.

Parents transmit their advantages or disadvantages to their children that affect their children's educational outcomes. Dunlosky, Rawson, Marsh, Nathan and Willingham (2013) have explained in their writing "Why Does Family Wealth successfully affect learning?". How the students of higher socioeconomic status are more successful academically than those having a lower socio-economic status. They have given two reasons to support their point of view. First, wealthier parents use their resources to provide more and better learning opportunities for their children. Second, children from poor socio-economic homes are subjected to chronic stress, which is destructive to learning. It is clear that parents of students who have a higher socioeconomic status benefit from the unequal distribution of resources, which in turn, helps those students, achieve higher academic success than a student whose parents are of lower socioeconomic status and who do not receive the same resources. Additionally, there are many consequences that arise from the unequal distribution of wealth and resources to the people of lower socioeconomic status.

Schwab and Lew-Williams (2016) write in Language Learning, Socioeconomic Status, and Child-Directed Speech *that,* "On average, children from lower-SES families show a slower vocabulary growth relative to their higher-SES peers, and these differences persist into the school years" (Schwab & Lew-Williams, 2016). Consequently, belonging to the low status economic affects the learning of vocabulary which has a remarkable influence on language learning. This is not limited only to the learning their native language, but also other languages, if the children choose to do so as they progress through school. Furthermore, various inclusive reviews of the existing literature found a significant

positive correlation between the social background or socioeconomic status and academic achievement and language learning (Schwab & Lew-Williams, 2016; Farooq et.al, 2011; Arshad et.al 2012; Jeynes,1998; Umbel, & Ki Oller, 1994). Socioeconomic barriers commonly slow down an individuals' vocational progress. Career speed breakers are significantly higher for those with poor socio-economic background (Blustein, 2013).

These analyses clearly state that the children of low SES families show the following arrays in terms of education, language learning and language acquisition in comparison to the children from the high SES families; literacy, numeracy and understanding level of low SES families students also excites. Frequency of dropout from study is much higher in low SES families and such students have comparatively lesser retention spam. These learners do not give enough attention to learning and as a result, only few of them can take admission in higher education institutes. Most of these students have inconsistent and negative behavior and they have no inclination towards the subjects like mathematics and science. Due to their negative image in school they suffer from learning difficulties. Even after completing their education, it becomes very difficult for them to secure a job for themselves.

Crosnoe et al.(2002) observed and suggested that the sector (public or private) of a school is a very important factor, school whether private or public sector plays an important part in a student's academic achievement and learning. The structural factor of schools, in public sector schools funding issues have been seen very often so, they cannot show or perform well and cannot give outstanding results as compared to schools of the private sector. This is because of the lack of facilities and resources, but on the other hand, private sector schools have additional funding and resources. This additional subsidy enhances the quality of the education and academic achievement and motivation (Crosnoe, Frank, & Mueller 2008; Caldwell, & Hayward, 2002). Scientific research shows the correlation between physical environment of classroom and outcomes of student's learning . Two conclusions are notable, first, the building's structural facilities influence the performance of students. Second, low academic achievement of students is significantly linked with poor arrangement of light, noise, substandard quality of air, and deficient air conditioning in the classroom.

Most of the schools do not have sufficient facilities and those students who have a low status do not have proper facilities at their homes too. Scientific study tells how much classroom's symbolic structure is important for a child. In a properly decorated classroom, a child feels that he is valued and has importance. This type of environment makes the child active to learn and achieve his goals. These symbolic classrooms let the child feel his importance and value with far-reaching consequences for students' educational choices and achievements. The students in each class also is a very important factor; schools of the private sector have smaller class size which increases the student-teacher relationship and plays a positive role in the success of students. It is observed that children with under and low status of socioeconomics, social background got admission in schools of public sector which have lack of facilities and resources so these children show less interest in schooling and learning as well, compared to students with high socioeconomic status and class. A number of researches have highlighted a positive correlation in basic form and structure and learners' performance. Correlational research is one of the most used method in classroom studies. Whereas in some of the researches performed in laboratories also have given the same result showing that substandard structural conditions (e.g., noise, air

conditioning) cause decrease in cognitive performance of learners. Taken together, these findings strongly suggest that building and improvement in physical conditions of class rooms and facilities can increase student learning and cognitive achievement. Students with low socioeconomic status families do not have approach to use the vital resources, so this difference creates further stress and disappointment in students (Kingdon, 2007, Whitty, 2008, Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982).

Children of low SES or social-background show disparities in language acquisition as compared to the children of high SES. According to different aspect of language such as semantic, syntax (rules that govern to combine words in the formation of phrases) morphology (the study of structure of words), phonology (the study of the way sounds function in language) and semantic (the study of meaning of words and phrases). Researches show that children with high SES have large communicative vocabularies this is because of the difference in efficiency of processing similar words (Farrant & Zubrick, 2012). Similarly, syntax refers to organization and arrangement of phrases and words to make a sentence, according to Vasilyeva, Waterfall, and Huttenlocher (2008) children with low SES feel difficulties in formation of a complex sentence structure. Furthermore, morphology is the study of how sentences are formed according to Ravid and Schiff (2012) children with high SES more accurately use grammatical rules as compared to children with low SES. Similarly, phonology is the study of sounds of different words and phonological awareness is a capability to acknowledge words made up with different sounds. Schiff and Ravid (2012) say that learners with low SES have low phonological awareness.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are:

1- To study the relationship between socio-economic status and achievement of students in ESL class.
2- To find out the impact of socio-economic status on student's achievement in ESL classroom.

Research questions

1. What is the nature of the relationship between socio-economic status and students' achievement in the ESL classrooms?
2. How far the socioeconomic status affects the students' achievement in English language's sentence, grammar, vocabulary and spelling in classroom?

Hypothesis

$H^0 1$: There is no significant relationship between students' socio economic status and their ESL achievement.

$H^0 2$: There is no significant relationship between students' economic status and English language sentence, grammar, vocabulary and spelling achievement of students.

Statement of the Problem

Many researches have been conducted to find out the factors other than within the school boundaries that affect the successful learning of the English language. According to

Thompson (2008), these include the age of acquisition, motivation, language family, literacy, and socioeconomic status. Several researchers claim that socio economic status plays a significant role in the achievement of learners (Yuet, 2008; Ghani, 2003; Marks, Cresswell, & Ainley, 2006)

The fact that socioeconomic status affects the learning outcomes of students in the contact of Pakistan's education system, where English is learnt both as the countries both official and second langue, will be reflected by this research. There are different levels of learning, for example affective level, cognitive level and operative level. The learning process at all these different levels needs to be balanced. The main reason behind this observation can be the position of learners from higher socioeconomic classes to arrange high-quality private tuitions of English language and having educated parents. The use of English is not uncommon for them at the workplace. Contrary to this for the learners from disadvantaged class, it is impossible to manage all these, which significantly reduces the performance of a student. Consequently, belonging to lower socioeconomic status results in slower vocabulary growth, which has a remarkable influence on language learning.

Research Methodology

The current study is descriptive in nature. Quantitative method was used for data analysis. A demographic survey was conducted on Secondary School students. The tools used for data collection were a demographic questionnaire for finding the socio economic statues of the students and a Standardized test to know the level of command over the English language of the students in all four skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking). Descriptive analysis and Pearson correlation were carried out on the collected data to know the relationship of socio economic status of students and their level of achievement in English as a second language.

Population and Sample Size

The population for the current research includes all secondary school students. Using simple random sampling technique 162 students were selected from four conveniently chosen Dannish public schools in Punjab, Pakistan. The purpose of selecting sample form these conveniently selected schools was that such schools have different social classes students representing all the society. Since the schools' administration is run on the Daanish School Act which is a special set of rules passed by Provincial Assembly of Punjab.

Design of the Study

The study consists of six by for factorial design, fathers' occupation servers as independent variable and English Language achievement functions as the dependent variable of the study. The relationship of the variables is given in Table 1 as a schematic depiction.

Table 1. Relationship between the independent and dependent variables of the study

Independent Variables						
Professional	Manager	Clerk	Skilled Labor	Simi Skilled Labor	Unskilled Labor	Dependent Variables

	Sentence
	Grammar
	Vocabulary
	Spelling

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Father's Occupation		Sentence		Vocabulary		Spelling		Grammar	
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Unskilled Laborer	29	16.21	5.20	22.76	4.68	28.34	5.28	18.93	6.78
Semi-Skilled Laborer	28	18.54	5.50	24.54	3.73	26.93	6.55	19.43	5.86
Skilled Laborer	27	28.96	6.04	30.33	5.505	30.19	6.55	28.22	7.59
Clerical	32	33.69	8.876	31.12	5.82	27.47	7.12	33.22	9.53
Managerial	30	37.80	9.69	30.80	6.36	27.27	7.14	35.07	10.58
Professional	16	41.88	10.87	32.69	7.28	29.25	6.77	39.06	11.43

Table 2 illustrates the descriptive analysis of fathers' occupations and English. It shows that the professional category has the highest standard deviation of 11.42 whereas the semi-skilled laborer category has the least standard deviation of 5.86 in grammar. The managerial category has a 7.14 standard deviation of spelling as compared with the unskilled laborer category of 5.28. Vocabulary and sentence have a standard deviation of 7.28 and 10.87 respectively by managerial category whereas the least standard deviation of vocabulary and sentence is carried by semi-skilled laborer and unskilled laborer categories both (2.73, 5.20 and 5.20)

Table 3. Inter-correlation of the studied variables**.**

Sentence				
Vocabulary	.662**			
Spelling	.505**	0.071		
Grammar	.608**	.933**	0.059	
Total English marks	.802**	.839**	.505**	.833**
Total family income	.508**	.754**	0.001	.635**	.585**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows the inter-correlation between studied variables. All the sub-variables of English language were significantly positively correlated with total marks in English. Similarly, all the subcategories were significantly positively correlated with each other. Furthermore, total family income significantly and positively correlated with English language learning. Which indicated that social-background of student significantly affect the learning of English as a second language.

Discussion

This research aimed to explore the link between social-background and learning of English as a second language. It was postulated that there is a significant positive relationship between social background and learning of English as a second language. The outcomes of this research showed that there is a remarkable constructive link between the socio-economic status and learning of English as a second language and socio-economic status of students significantly predicted learning of English language score of achievement specially in Grammar, Vocabulary and Senses but it is not a strong predictor of the score in the spelling test. These findings are fully supported by a study conducted by Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier and Maczuga (2009) and it concluded that learners from low SES show slower academic skills growth as compared to children of a high SES. They further concluded that low SES is related to deprived and delayed cognitive growth, memory, language development and socio-emotional processing. Similar findings were reported by Ryan (2009) according to him family-background variables such as social-background or socio-economic status significantly affect children's academic achievement and language learning. The findings of this study also enhance the results of Aikens and Barbarin (2008) who proved that structural facilities affect children's academic achievement and process of language acquisition. Learning outcomes of students are connected with the home environment.

Implications

With consideration to implications of the present study, the findings of the study would benefit the school, English teachers, parents, and school psychologists and policymakers and curriculum developers to understand the role of socioeconomic status in learning in general as well as in language learning. This study can be pilot a project to explore the importance of the socioeconomic status of students and its impact on learning, academic achievement, academic motivation and the process of language acquisition. ESL learning can be enhanced only when the environment is conducive and helpful.

This research would help policymakers to introduce their policies accordingly. This study is enough to show the importance of family's socio-economic status in stretching the gulf of disparity between the performances of students of all working classes form unskilled labor to Manager and Professional. Further research is needed in addressing the performance gap, as the research implies, apart from schools other organizations should also be studied and explored to help the young learners to cope with career selection changes in life. Early childhood has special importance in life as it's the time of the brain's maximum development. Finally, if all education systems follow the modern approaches with the same spirit the common goal of equality never remains unmet.

The disparities brought to schools by children of different socioeconomic status are difficult to be leveled only by utilizing schools. A joint venture of school programs, social services, community organizations, and civil society should be launched to make the work remarkable. All the children, from whatever socio –economic background they belong, should be ensured to avail equal opportunities for a better performance.

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