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## Study of Socio-Economic Background and its Effect on the Ability of English Reading Skills at Secondary School Level

**Abstract** *The study aims to see the effect of the socio-economic background of learners on their language skills of 9th class students in public sector schools in southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Stratified simple random sampling technique was adopted following Krejcie and Morgan rule and 379 respondents were consulted for data collection. Two valid and reliable instruments were applied, first, the socio-economic status scale and then test were conducted for finding ability in reading skills i.e. comprehension, fluency, identification of adverb, to skim and to scan the passages. Data was analyzed through mean; for checking the outcome of SE background on the reading skills, the mean of means was calculated. The students who have a supportive environment at home for English performed better in test scores of comprehension, fluency, adverb identification, skimming and scanning. The study recommends that students may be supported at home for polishing their reading skills.*

**Key Words:** Socio Economic Background, Effect, Reading Skills

### Introduction

The basic aim of education is to shape a state where every individual must have the right to think and act freely. The standard of education needs to be evaluated from time to time. In classrooms, creative activities may be adopted to solve all the complicated issues regarding education. Today there is a hot talk about how to motivate the students to learn and adopt good reading habit culture. Since 2008, a growing number of developing countries have highlighted the importance of reading skills in early grades students of the English language (Fareed et al., 2016). Listening and reading are considered skills of passive nature. In the recent scenario, educationists across the world apprehended that reading is a mandatory component like the other three skills listening, writing and speaking. Reading is not a simple skill but various psychological, physical and social elements are contributing to its understanding. Unluckily, our educational institutions do not play a practical part in promoting the skills of the learners in reading. The ground reality presents a very dismal picture of the present scenario of educational institutions. The 21- century is the century of science and technology and the world has taken the shape of a global village. In this global scenario, in the highly developed means of communication and transport, ideas go faster all over the world. There is a severe need for polishing the reading skills of the learners in order to update them with world knowledge. The importance of reading skills plays the function of a bridge to understand the different nations of the world and this reality cannot be challenged (Farooq, 2012). Besides all modes of communication, reading has a prominent place in English Language skills. Reading is the mode to comprehend written messages. Rahman (2006) emphasized on polishing reading skills for identification and understanding of the written material. This activity covers thought and awareness both; a reader applies various strategies for understanding contextual and grammatical knowledge and vocabulary. Perfettie, Landi and Oakhill (2005) commented that weak word recognition power always leads to weak grip on comprehension. Dekeyser (2007)

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reflected that the utilization of the reading techniques is important to enhance and understand the text. The four reading techniques include the concerns i.e. How to skim the material, in what way the material will be scanned, where to practice loud and silent reading. These questions are important to develop fluency in reading the text. Skimming is done to get the central idea of the text. Aslam (2008) commented that a reader frames an overall impression of the text during the process of skimming and the theme of the text is derived. Dekeyser (2007) concluded that scanning is carried out by the reader to get specific information; an answer is searched out of a known question. Nahrwold (2005) talked that intensive reading is done for accuracy. This process involves a deep and thorough understanding of a text whereas extensive reading is done for fluency and usually longer texts are considered for reading purposes.

### **Socio Economic Status**

The term socio-economic status (SES) is the societal prominence and position of a group. (American Psychology Association, 2018). Techniques and ways to measure the domestic background of a learner are also called socioeconomic status. There are multiple forms of educational variations. Van De Wefhost and Mijis (2010) debated that these variations in education are only due to the influence of social background on students. The differences are measured by the performance of test scores as well as the learning of children. A relationship between the achievement of children and family background depends on the schooling system as well as the level of centralization and homogeneity i.e. social context. School children gain high educational credentials if they belong to a high social class. The main element which is prominent in the success of schooling is socio-economic status. Yang (2003) discussed that the language style, social ability and the attitude of a student in reading of newspapers and other print material refers to the social class of a family. Multiple pieces of evidences from research reports declare that family SES has a positive as well as negative influence and impression on the life of a student reading in a school. There is an impact in terms of educational outcomes, achievements and capital i.e. economic, cultural and social. Eventually, all the modifications and alterations in the accessibility of the mentioned capital at home lead to inequalities and differences in the academic achievement of children.

### **Reading skills**

Reading creates a strong interaction and contact between the mind of writer and the reader (Nuttal, 2002). Pang et al. (2003) communicated that reading includes all the printed text material along with comprehension. Word recognition and comprehension are two major processes of reading skills. Word recognition is the procedure and practice in which the written text material resembles the spoken language. Effective reading enables the reader to identify the word. This relies on the nature of the type of letters, words shape and range of learners' experience. Comprehension depends on mechanical activity which consists of decoding the words, sentences and paragraphs on the page. The brain receives signals from the eye. There is a basic visual task on this mechanical level. Similarly during the process of a cognitive task in which the visual information is interpreted, through which the reader seeks to read for meaning and purpose of the writer. Finally, the term reading refers to the immediate as well as instant acknowledgment of several printed symbols. Thus reading is the understanding of all the ideas and information well transferred and grasped. A reader tries to make a visual form of information as soon as he interacts with the provided printed written material. Just receiving the text material is not enough, rather understanding the material is important (Klinger, 2007).

### **Teaching of Reading Elements**

Pinnel (2008) commented that the reading process covers five important elements such as phonics, vocabulary, fluency, awareness and phonemes. The phoneme is the slightest unit of speech of sound which a word carries and there are 44 phonemes in the English language which a reader should know. Rauth & Staurt (2008) talking on phoneme awareness that every word has some distinct sounds e.g.

fan is made up of three sounds i.e. /f.a.n/. Pinnel (2008) talks in this regard that phonics is the study of the relationship between a specific letter and its sounds and every language presents a systematic relation between the text and spoken symbols. Phonics makes the reader capable of identifying sounds of every letter and associates it with its symbols and this active reading process takes place. Fluency is the accurate, rapid oral reading expression of language and a reader with strong fluency power can read a text easily and effectively (Pilkulski & Chard, 2005). The vocabulary is one of the strong components of reading and it is the knowledge of word and its meaning and one can say that it is the soul of language and ineffective communication occurs if the vocabulary is not updated and enriched. A man with strong knowledge of words, his communication will be more effective (Diamond, Linda & Gutlohn, 2006). Pressley et al (2001) focus on comprehension for effective communication and he calls it interaction of a reader with the text. Competency is needed for academic achievement and competent readers are expected to question, calculate, solve problems and think critically. Wong (2007) defined competency that it is the skill of a reader to pronounce correctly and express well and it is the major skill that is desired for completion of the task.

### **Developing Reading Skills:**

Reading skill becomes complex with the passage of time, much of the early reading work may be done with the help of simple material and techniques. Simple material needs to be provided to the children at an early stage in order to understand it easily. The child may be given the reading material with the familiar words and acquainted sentence pattern. Children should not be made confused by giving them unknown words with complicated sentence structure. Let the child gain confidence by learning to read those words and sentences whose meaning he already knows. "The work of associating written forms with their corresponding spoken forms and so with their meaning is quite enough for the present. This is an essential first step towards fluent reading with understanding" (Danielson, 2003).

Their spoken language needs to be a great influence to cover some of the basic words and ideas which they would meet later in printed form. Lack of this background, there is a possibility that the printed symbols will have only an artificial meaning for some pupils? The printed word must 'tell something to the child'; it must unfold information that he wants to hear that provides pleasure and incentive for him.

### **Objective**

To know the result of socio-economic background for developing the skills in reading at Government schools at the secondary level.

### **Study Question**

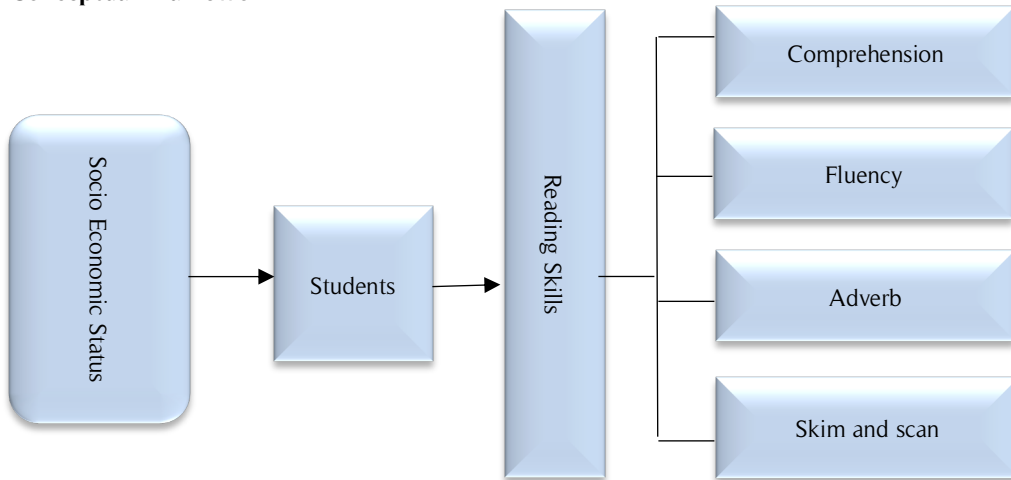
What is the result of socio-economic background on improvement of reading skills of the learners?

### **Methodology**

The study is quantitative in nature and the survey method was used for data collection. The students enrolled in the public sector secondary level school of 9<sup>th</sup> class constituted the population of the study. There are a total 29945 of 9<sup>th</sup> class students enrolled in 606 Government schools of Southern districts. The sample of 379 students was taken as a sample by following Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Division 1, division 2 & division 3 were represented by sample size 127, 126 and 126 respectively. Two tools were applied for getting responses from the respondents. The instrument was developed to see the outcome of family background on the ability of skills related to the reading of the learners at the secondary level. It was constructed with five options following the scale of Likert. It was first processed for the purpose of content validity and then to check its reliability, pilot testing was processed. Some items were deleted, some were partially corrected and finally, an instrument of 16 items was applied for data collection. The items included were related to know about the social life of students, support

of parents, Family support towards English, engagement in movies, availability of English tutors, profession of parents, attitude of parents, polishing the skills at home. The second tool was reading test to know the ability of learners. The test includes items of 9- class course book Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It consisted of 4 questions, the first was to see the comprehension level, second was about the coherence, the 3- question was to identify the adverb in the selected paragraph and 4- question was to check the reading skill of student in matching the heading of the text. It was carrying 20 marks. The reading test was processed for the purpose of the validation and it was made reliable by using Cronbach alpha. The data was analyzed by applying mean, and to see the effects of SES on the skills related to the reading of the learners mean of mean was calculated and matched with (Valerio, 2015) table.

**Conceptual Framework**



**Results and Discussions**

**Description of Mean Scale table Valerio 2015.**

Rule	M Range	Explanation
1	1.0-1.79	Not affected
2	1.80-2.59	Slightly affected
3	2.60-3.39	Moderately affected
4	3.40-4.19	Much affected
5	4.20-5.00	Very much affected

**Table 1.** Effect of SES on Reading Skill of Secondary School Students of Division I

SES Mean		Comprehension		Fluency		Adverb		Skimming and scanning	
Mean		Marks		Marks		Marks		Marks	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
3.47	3.66	3.31	3.97	1.88	2.11	2.58	3.02	2.23	2.29
<b>Mean of Means of Male and Female students about Reading skill of English</b>									
Comprehension		Fluency		Adverb		Skimming and Scanning			
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
3.39	3.81	2.67	2.88	3.02	3.34	2.85	2.97		

The mean of the mean value of learners of both the gender toward comprehension is 3.39 and 3.81 respectively as shown in table 1. According to Valerio (2015), the mean range of 3.39 is considered as moderately affected while 3.81 is considered as much affected. Therefore the means of boys about reading comprehension was 3.39 which are moderately affected while the mean value of female was 3.81 which are much affected. Both the gender skills related to fluency, adverb and skimming and scanning skills are moderately affected through SES as according to Valerio’s table.

**Table 2.** Effect of SES on Reading Skill of Secondary School Students of Division II

SES Mean		Comprehension		Fluency		Adverb		Skimming and scanning	
Mean		Marks		Marks		Marks		Marks	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
3.12	2.83	2.88	2.53	1.21	1.67	2.11	1.92	1.97	1.78
<b>Mean of Means of Male and Female students about Reading skill of English</b>									
Comprehension		Fluency		Adverb		Skimming and Scanning			
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
3.5	2.68	2.16	2.25	2.61	2.37	2.54	2.30		

The mean of the means value of male and female students toward reading comprehension is 3.5 and 2.68 respectively as shown in table 2. According to Valerio (2015), the mean range of 2.60-3.39 is considered as moderately affected. Therefore the reading comprehension skill of male and female students is moderately affected through SES. Similarly, male and female students’ fluency and skimming and scanning skills are slightly affected through SES as according to Valerio’s table. The adverb skill of male students is moderately affected while the female adverb skill is slightly affected through SES as according to Valerio’s table.

**Table 3.** Effect of SES on Reading Skill of Secondary School Students of Division III

SES Mean		Comprehension		Fluency		Adverb		Skimming and scanning	
Mean		Marks		Marks		Marks		Marks	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
3.41	3.57	3.20	3.63	1.61	1.92	2.11	2.91	2.01	2.21
<b>Mean of Means of Male and Female students about Reading skill of English</b>									
Comprehension		Fluency		Adverb		Skimming and Scanning			
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
3.30	3.6	2.51	2.7	2.76	3.24	2.71	2.89		

Table 3 indicates that the reading comprehension, adverb and skimming and scanning skills of male and female students of division 3 are moderately affected through SES while the fluency skill of male and female students is slightly affected through SES as according to Valerio’s table.

## Discussion

The study highlights that the home environment affects a lot on the reading skills of the children if the parents help them in English language learning or arrange tutors to support them in their English language learning and the students easily adopt that language. Previous studies conducted on the same theme reported that congenial environment at home for English language skills worked well on the academic achievement and on the reading skills. With the intensifying of socio-economic development, much attention has been projected between the SES and reading skills of school student (Bradley &

Corwyn, 2002: Sirin, 2005). The results of the existing study and those of Bergin's (2001) mutually verify and support that parents' motivation to their children in improving reading skills are basically affecting SES. Clark and Ladd (2000) supported the present study that the cooperation of parents with their children is just as the role of bridge and reflects that the connection between SES and reading fluency ability of children is very complex. Lareau (2012) discussed that there is a strong link amongst SES and reading attainment of learners. Bradley and Corwyn (2002) commented that the SE background influences their learning skills related to reading, the more supportive environment, and the better results in their language learning.

## **Conclusion**

It was concluded that the division I students getting attention and facilities from their parents because their skills such as reading comprehension, fluency, adverb and skimming and scanning are moderately affecting through socio-economic status. The females getting extra care than males in division I in reading comprehension from their parents. Further concluded that the division II students are taking moderately care from their parents especially in their reading comprehension while students' fluency, adverb and skimming and scanning skills are not up to the mark alike division I and III students. The division III students are getting attention and facilities from their parents in their reading comprehension, fluency, adverb and skimming and scanning the same alike division I students. Comparatively the students of division I and III are performing better than division II in the area of reading comprehension, adverb and skimming and scanning. The students of I and III division students are not performing up to desirable need in area of fluency while the division II students need much improvement in all the area such as reading comprehension, fluency, adverb and skimming and scanning because they are not covering these skills according to marketable need.

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