

## **Role of Socioeconomic Status in ESL Learning**

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### **Abstract**

Socioeconomic status is one of the significant factors that affect language learning. The main aim of this study was to investigate the socioeconomic background of students and its role in their ESL learning. In today's world of advancement, learning English as a second language is very necessary to communicate with others for different purposes. Students of backward countries, like Pakistan, face socioeconomic problems in their learning, especially in ESL. The present study has critically analyzed the role of socioeconomic status on learning English as a second language at the secondary school level. The data for the present study was collected from 205 students of grade 10 of various 12 public, private, boys and girls schools of district Rahim Yar Khan. The researchers used a questionnaire to investigate the role of socioeconomic status on learning English as a second language. The data represents the subject matter and attitudes towards the problem under the research. SPSS (statistical packages for social science) software was used for the analysis and interpretation of the valid data. The research hypothesis was tested while analyzing the data that provided a framework for the findings. The result of the study revealed that among different other factors, socioeconomic status plays an important role for ESL learners. Those students who are financially poor, cannot focus on their ESL learning because they have to labor along with their studies for their livelihood. Similarly, in backward areas, people do not pay attention towards their children's education. So, students show no interest in learning, especially in ESL.

**Keywords:** Role, Socioeconomic, Status, ESL, Learning.

### **1. Introduction**

Language is the only source of communicating human sentiments and for social interaction among human creatures. Due to the expanding population massively and the quick development of science, commerce, innovation and individual of distinctive countries and societies communicate and interact with each other to achieve common goals. There is a need to continue this interaction and

socialization. The English language is one of the most public connection languages amongst all further languages. So learning the English language has become a special significance (Marge et al., 2021).

Socioeconomic status is defined as a measure of one's combined economic and social status and tends to be positively associated with better health.(Caldas & Bankston, 1997)

The socioeconomic status of a family consists of some basic characteristics like income level, educational level, occupation, and social status of a particular person or a family in society. (Mueller & Parcel, 1981) have argued that the families of high socioeconomic status often succeed to prepare their children for school because they can get access to a wide variety of facilities and they can provide their best resources and their best support in roundabout every prospective regarding their educational and learning point of view. They provide their children with all kinds of high-quality child care. In the home environment, they also provide all kinds of basic and necessary facilities regarding their learning process. Due to these basic facilities often they can learn a lot of things from their games. They encourage their children in all kinds of learning activities. They also try to take care of their children's health. The home environment has a great impact on the children's learning process.

The level of income, educational background, political power, and occupation of a person are the main differences between people of any society. People are recognized in society due to their education, occupation, and level of income (Mijs, 2021).

English is considered one of the most important languages throughout the world. It is taught in every school, college, and university in the world. The English language has become an international language and the language of science, technology, and business (Haidar & Fang, 2019). According to McKay (2002) it is an important tool in educational careers throughout the world. The top priority of the students and parents is to gain complete command and develop the skills in the English language to conquer business and technological fields which are nowadays prevailing all over the world. Students should know the importance of the English language in professional life in the near future. They should also know that all business and financial setup now depend on the English language. Nowadays English is considered as the language of pioneering, discovering, learning, teaching, and marketing. Nayar (1997) has discussed In briefly that English has become the only source of communication with the whole world. Many researchers and scientists are working in their libraries and science laboratories to show the result of their studies in the English language field. That is why English is still continued to be taught in educational institutions throughout the world.

Pakistan wants to excel over the world in the field of science, technology, business, and education. But without the knowledge of the English language, they could not progress. Pakistani educated people now need to have a firm and confident grasp over the English language in which they can express themselves in skillful ways and access the great amount of information that is necessary for our daily practical life. The main fact of this century is globalization. Today economic crises are the problems of the whole world (Us Saqlain, Shafqat, & Hassan, 2020). The economic crises give increasing trends to global communities of knowledge, global use of technologies, and global use of directives to problem-solving. Thus we need a language that we are able to communicate with the whole world in order to bring out Pakistan in these economic crises. That language is only the English language. There is a need to increase learners of the English language. English classrooms and English teachers are the best sources to become aware of worldwide challenges (Rasool & Winke, 2019).

Language is a social phenomenon for the people of any society. Language can be studied from various angles as a descriptive, philosophical, cultural, and social phenomenon. Sociolinguistics is the

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study of language and society. In other words, it can be studied its relation to society and its various social factors. In a society, language is affected by age, personality, sex, religion, education, social class, race, and geographical boundaries (Munishi, 2018).

Many studies have been carried out on the factors that affect English language learning. Socioeconomic status is one of the major factors that keep a great importance in learning English as a second language. The current study is led to discover how the socioeconomic status of learners affects English language learning. How social position and economic status of the people of particular areas affect the quality of learning the English language.

### 2. Literature review

The socio-economic background is one of the major factors that affect English language learning. This is a global phenomenon. All non-native countries have been facing the same problem. In this research, we are going to examine this problem at the secondary school level. Pakistan is an underdeveloped country. That is why socio-economic factors are considered the most important factors that affect learning English as a second or foreign language not only in Pakistan but in all non-native countries of the world (Choe & Seo, 2020).

Learning English or any other language is not an easy task for learners and learners always face difficulties while learning the English language home and school are two important social factors. Both of these keep great value in the learning process (Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018). According to Ferreira, Godinez, Gabbard, Vieira, and Caçola (2018) home and school are the two most important social environments where a child grows up. He keeps a great attachment to both of these environmental factors. Both environmental factors have great value in the learning process. Better home and better school environments provide better input in learners that result in the development of skills in the learning process.

Bernstein (1961) has claimed that language used by the lower working class is different in content from the higher working class home background. The social interaction and communication that high-class learners have at home help them to develop skills and extensive vocabulary while the learners of lower-class are deprived of this opportunity and face language learning difficulties in formal learning and informal learning situations. Such a kind of low-level linguistic ability and poor performance would also have an impact on attitude to learn and abstract thinking. Socio-economic status has a great influence on language learning. Sierzchula, Bakker, Maat, and Van Wee (2014) have stated that socio-economic status is the most important factor that keeps a great value regarding success at the school level (Ogbu, 1983). The better socio-economic status of a family leads learners towards success and skills development in the language learning process.

The socioeconomic status of a family is based on the income level of the family, level of education, occupation, and social status in society. Every person or every family has their socioeconomic status in society. All families are different in socioeconomic status from each other (Vukojevic et al., 2017). Families of low socioeconomic status face difficulties and challenges in their life. Often they face a lack of necessities. In this condition, they prefer to provide basic facilities like food, clothes, and health facilities to their families. In such kinds of families, students face a lack of necessary facilities in their educational careers. In this condition learning English becomes impossible for the learners of poor families (Browman, Destin, Carswell, & Svoboda, 2017). People of high socioeconomic status often have more success in providing their children with school because they have easy access to a wide variety of

resources to encourage and support their children for an academic career. They can provide all types of basic facilities like books, tutors, use of technology, and can encourage their children in various positive learning activities at home. The families of high socioeconomic status often give better guidelines and consultation regarding children's better future careers. Students of such families may have additional qualities and can develop their learning skills (Manstead, 2018). The result of a study reveals that students of high socioeconomic status show better performance in their academic careers than the children of low socioeconomic background families (Chen, Kong, Gao, & Mo, 2018). Students of low socioeconomic status learned to read and write with greater difficulty than the children of high socioeconomic status (Dietrichson, Bøg, Filges, & Klint Jørgensen, 2017). Socioeconomic status is based on education level, level of income, and occupation of a family. Learning English is an important phenomenon for students. Socioeconomic status affects greatly on learning English. Learning English or any other second or foreign language is not an easy task. Children of a strong socioeconomic background are often more successful in learning English (Suna, Tanberkan, Bekir, Matjaz, & Mahmut, 2020). A study shows that strong income and a strong educational level of families provide a better stage to develop skills in learning English. The better educational level makes language acquisition easy and accessible for learners. Educated people provide a supportive environment for their children at home (Williams, Bryan, Morrison, & Scott, 2017).

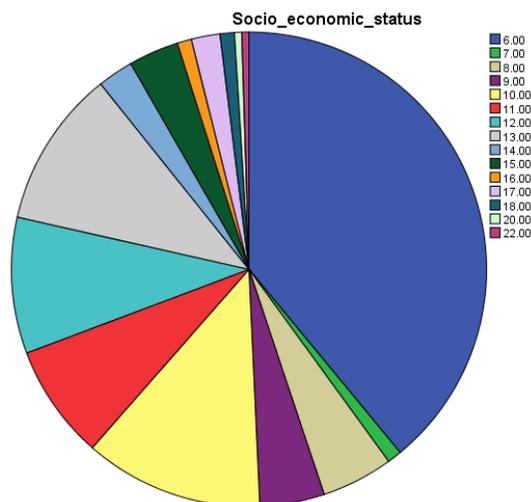
The people of low socioeconomic status always try to fulfill the basic needs of the family and cannot save the money and resources for their future generation. While the families of high socioeconomic status can save the wealth and resources and also fulfill the basic and luxuries needs of their children and other family members. The level of income and educational background of a family plays a positive and important role in learning L2 (Cheng, Wang, & Liu, 2019). The level of income depends on the educational level of a family. In the field of education high standard degrees such as the degree of doctors, engineers and other high professional degrees cannot be achieved without a high-income level. The children of high-income families can get such kinds of degrees. As much as income is high the educational level will also be high. It is a noticeable fact that the children of high-income families become doctors, engineers, judges, and bureaucrats. A higher level of education depends on the high-income level of the particular family. All of these higher standard degrees also provide a better future and a high level of earning resources (Morales & Maravilla, 2019).

### **3. Methodology**

The present study is descriptive in nature which provides insight about the effect of socioeconomic status in learning English as a second language. A questionnaire was used for data collection. SPSS software was used to analyze or interpret the valid data. Government and private boys and girls secondary schools of district Rahim Yar Khan were the population of the study. 205 students belonging to public, private, boys, girls, urban, and rural areas were the participants of the study. Most of the participants belonged to Urdu, Saraiki and Punjabi language backgrounds.

### **4. Data Analysis**

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The result of the table-1 reveals descriptive statistics of each statement regarding respondents' views about the importance of socioeconomic status. About (58%) respondents strongly agree and (33%) agree that strong and wealthy home environment solve all language learning related problems. About (64%) respondents agree and (19%) strongly agree that knowledgeable mother can help their children in learning English. About (50%) respondents disagree and (18%) strongly disagree that their parents help them in English language learning. As a whole the result indicates that strong socioeconomic status has its positive effect in learning English as a second language. The respondents agree that strong, wealthy and educated home environment helps the learners in their learning English as a second language. Educated parents can help their children in learning English as a second language.

**Table-1 Role of Socioeconomic status**

S.No	Level of Agreement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Mean	Std.
S1	F	120	68	7	5	5	1.6	.9
	%	58.5	33.2	3.4	2.4	2.4		
S2	F	40	132	12	3	18	2.1	1.0
	%	19.5	64.4	6	1.5	9		
S3	F	10	26	30	101	38	3.6	1.1
	%	5	13	15	49.3	18.5		
S4	F	5	37	24	36	103	3.9	1.2
	%	2.4	18.0	12	18	50.2		

Table-2 indicates the importance of socioeconomic status in learning English as a second language. The result shows that different schools have their own different views about the role of socioeconomic status ( $df=11,193,204$ ,  $F=4.88$ ,  $p<.000$ ). Degree of the freedom is between 11 and 193 and sign value ( $p<.000$ ) reveals that socioeconomic status is an important factor in learning English. Means result (12.4375) displays that Government girls H/S Khanpur give much importance of socioeconomic status.

**Table-2 Role of Socio-economic status**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Government Boys H/S sardar garh	20	11.9500	5.11422	540.668 1940.581 2481.249	11 193 204	49.152 10.055	4.888	.000
Government Boys H/S Rukan Pur	17	8.4706	3.35629					
Government Boys H/S Mian Wali	19	9.0000	3.39935					
Government Girls H/S Sardar Garh	18	8.7222	3.17723					
Government Girls H/S Zahir Pir	18	11.1111	3.12276					
Government Girls H/S khan pur	16	12.4375	2.47572					
The Scholar boys school Zahir Pir	21	9.1429	3.33595					
The Allied school khan pur	18	6.8333	1.94785					
The Extra Smart school sardar garh	18	9.4444	2.74874					
Bismilla girls school sardar garh	17	8.0000	2.03101					
Ali girls H/S sardar garh	12	10.5833	2.53909					
Al Ameen Islamia Girls school khan pur	11	8.1818	2.71360					
Total	205	9.5024	3.48755					

Table 3 displays the views of the respondents about the importance of Socio-economic of public and private schools. The result shows that the public and private schools have their own different opinion about the role of learners interest ( $df=203,194.963$ ,  $F=8.828, p=.001$ ) between the respondents. Mean Result (10.2778) indicates that public schools give much importance to socioeconomic status in learning English as a second language.

**Table 3- Role of Socioeconomic status**

School Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	T	df	Sig.
Public	108	10.2778	3.85201	8.828	3.505	203	.001
Private	97	8.6392	2.80693			194.963	

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Table 4 displays the views of the respondents about the importance of socioeconomic status of different public and private boys and girls schools. The result shows that the public and private boys and girls schools have their own different opinion about the role of socioeconomic status in learning English as a second language ( $df=3, 201.204, F=1.762, p=.156$ ) between the respondents. Mean result (10.6923) indicates that Girls public schools give much importance to socioeconomic status in learning English as a second language.

**Table 4- Role of Socioeconomic Status**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Boys public schools	56	9.8929	4.30509	156.794 2324.455 2481.249	3 201 204	52.265 11.564	4.519	.004
Girls public schools	52	10.6923	3.28716					
Boys private schools	57	8.5088	2.95878					
Girls Private Schools	40	8.8250	2.60067					
Total	205	9.5024	3.48755					

Table 5 displays the views of the respondents about the importance of socioeconomic status of different male and female respondents. The result shows that male and female respondents have their own different opinion about the importance of socioeconomic status in learning English as a second language ( $df=203, 202.810, F=6.030, p=.015$ ) between the respondents. Mean result (9.8804) indicates that female respondents give much importance to socioeconomic status in learning English as a second language.

**Table 5- Role of Socioeconomic Status**

Students Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	t	df	Sig.
Male	113	9.1947	3.73654	6.030	-1.429	203	.015
Female	92	9.8804	3.13380			202.810	

### 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Results of the study reveal how much socioeconomic status is important for learners for their learning English as a second language. The majority of the respondents agree that a strong and wealthy home environment decreases the difficulties in learning English as a second language. Knowledge of the mother and educated home environment plays a positive role in the learning process of the learners. They can support their school-going children in their learning process. If the father and mother are educated they can play a positive role in the learning process of the learners.

It is concluded from frequency and means that the values of strong socioeconomic status have a positive role in learning English as a second language. The respondents agree that a strong, wealthy and

educated home environment helps the learners in their learning English as a second language. Educated parents can help their children in learning English as a second language.

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