

Socio-Economic Factors: Impacts on English Language Vocabulary Size and Parental Involvement

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Abstract: *This study investigates the impact of socio-economic factors on the English vocabulary size of primary school pupils in Malaysian new villages. It integrated both quantitative and qualitative methods through surveys with demographic questions and adapted Controlled Vocabulary Levels test together with interviews involving pupils and their parents. Most pupils demonstrated difficulty in reaching vocabulary mastery at the 2,000-word basic level which serves as a minimum requirement for functional language capabilities. Vocabulary learning advancement at less common word levels showed strong associations with fathers' occupations and household income even though parental educational background demonstrated minimal effects. The qualitative data showed strong evidence for how parental involvement through learning facilities provision and direct instruction along with educational participation enhanced vocabulary acquisition for pupils. This study demonstrates that socio-economic differences must be addressed to boost English language learning in marginalised pupil populations because it reveals approaches to reduce these inequalities.*

Keywords: socio-economic factors, English vocabulary size, Malaysian primary schools, parental involvement, language learning, education equity

1. Introduction

Education in Malaysia places English language competence at its core because it creates vital pathways toward global opportunities for pupils. The path to language proficiency remains challenging for pupils whose belong to the low-income backgrounds. It is more visible to pupils from new villages since they experience economic and social difficulties which leads to the quality educational opportunities remain scarce. The aforementioned social challenges create specific academic barriers which limit both the academic success and English language development of pupils. Primary school pupils from new villages will be researched regarding the impact of their parental education level and occupation and family income on the development of their English vocabulary knowledge. This study assesses parental contribution to vocabulary learning as part of a detailed analysis tracking how social economic variations impact educational results.

2. Literature Review

The past research connects to this study's objectives by analysing the parent backgrounds in addition to how socio-economic variables affect English vocabulary learning and the effects of parental interaction on young learners' English acquisition. Multiple scholarly viewpoints analyse the research results in order to position them in relation to existing studies.

The educational opportunities together with learning outcome for children are strongly impacted by their parents' socio-economic position. Most new village parents generally end their education at secondary school level, according to research data presented by Jaafar et al (2019). According to Loh (2000), new villagers experienced high student dropout rates during the early 1980s because young children needed to start work due to economic difficulties. The work patterns followed by new village residents have changed since their first settlement. The majority of villagers have traditionally held occupations in agriculture as well as tin mining, while conducting small-scale business activities (McClymont, 2021). The ongoing process of urbanisation and industrial development has increased the number of parents who work as skilled employees and professionals and also engage in clerical jobs, according to ICOMOS Malaysia New Village Working Group (2022).

Income levels of parents play an essential role when it comes to shaping a child's education experience. The Third and Fourth Malaysia Plans recognised the residents of new villages as a “targeted poor group” because their monthly income fell under MYR 2,500 (Loh, 2000). The Malaysian economy has expanded considerably, yet new village population continues to experience inequality because local inhabitants earn below the standard national levels (ICOMOS Malaysia New Village Working Group, 2022). A majority of children encounter restricted access to excellent educational resources because of their financial limitations that also prevents them from engaging in English vocabulary learning.

The Relationship between Socio-Economic Factors and English Vocabulary Acquisition

The acquisition of vocabulary stands as an essential foundation for language fluency since several research investigations have studied how social and economic factors affects vocabulary growth. A study indicates that a child’s vocabulary development depends heavily on their parents' educational background and professional status and financial standing (Davis-Kean et al., 2020). The acquisition of vocabulary corresponds better among children whose parents possess advanced educational qualifications compared to children with low-educated parents, according to Lyesmaya et al. (2022). Research conducted in the study disproves the existing belief as it showed that mothers' educational attainment fail to affect children's vocabulary size.

Parental occupations alongside with household income seem to exercise substantial power over vocabulary development when measuring word frequency (Shah & Hussain, 2021). Professional fathers enable children to acquire better linguistic exposures that increases their vocabulary development potential (Davis-Kean et al., 2019). Higher household income among families grant access to educational learning tools including private tutoring services and English books and educational apps that facilitate vocabulary learning (Butler & Le, 2018). Malaysian research findings confirm this trend because high-income families enable pupils to achieve better English results through expanded educational opportunities (Mohamad et al., 2023).

Many researchers debate how social-economic indicators affect the process of language acquisition. The study by Muttaqin and Chuang (2022) investigated Indonesian university students who proved that social-economic factors did not influence their final academic results during tertiary education. Socio-economic status plays a more extensive role when children are in primary and secondary school, based on their research findings. Primary school pupils demonstrate better mastery of English vocabulary at advanced levels when their fathers have professional occupations and their family earns higher income. The present study validates this evidence.

Research findings showed a weak positive connection between wealth factors and vocabulary dimension (Levine et al., 2020). Research by Rosa et al. (2022) implies that extra factors including home language environment together with motivation and parental involvement influence vocabulary development more than socio-economic factors on their own. Researchers agree that the contact to linguistic activities during a child's early developmental stage becomes a fundamental element for vocabulary expansion (Van der Kleij et al., 2023).

The involvement of parents plays an essential role in achieving academic success for children, especially when it comes to language learning, according to Choudhury et al. (2024). English language learning produces positive results when parents integrate support at home and classroom collaboration with regular communication between their children and schools (Gabriela et al., 2022).

English language learning motivation in children appears to be strongly influenced by the way their parents feel about the language (Pham, 2021). When parents provide positive support, their children experience enhanced intrinsic motivation toward expanding English vocabulary (Shengyao et al., 2024). Pupils develop low motivation toward English language learning due to they struggle with self-esteem issues alongside minimal contact with English outside classroom settings (Gultom & Oktaviani, 2022). Aziz and Kashinathan (2021) demonstrated that Malaysian students experience low confidence in speaking in English because they lack of practice time that leads their vocabulary learning to suffer.

The degree of parental academic support changes with different socio-economic backgrounds. There are some advanced learning resources which mainly high-income families offer to their children: e-books alongside interactive learning aids and personalised English educational programmes (Korat et al., 2014). Low-income parents bridge their financial constraints through improved communication with their children, thus creating additional emotional support for learning, according to Ashcraft (2023). The study results supported by Butler and Le (2018) who showed that learner's success in English learning depends positively on parental education and financial resources. The ability to establish a supportive learning environment exists at a higher level in parents with advanced education, yet low-educated parents create value through supportive engagement.

Parents' engagement in their child's learning depends heavily on their employment responsibilities along with their proficiency to speak in English. Educational attainment determines parent confidence in helping children learn English because less-proficient parents often face language difficulties (Zhou, 2020). A study confirms that parent participation matters significantly even though parents struggle with English language proficiency (Diaz, 2018). Mohd Satar et al. (2020) found that both working parents have lesser time for direct education involvement although they offer financial support, while single-income parents tend to provide daily learning activities.

Parental involvement within educational settings helps significantly in developing children's vocabulary ability in English. Researchers establish that parental-school partnerships lead to better student language development (Thartori, 2019). According to Yulianti et al. (2018) school-related parental engagement increases with higher parental education level, but this study showed universal parental recognition in providing essential educational support for their children. Teacher feedback together with homework supervision gained approval from most respondents who proved that parental involvement matters equally across all social statuses for language learning.

The review of academic literature demonstrates how different social-economic elements along with vocabulary learning and parental English learning involvement, create complex educational interactions. This study shows that parental income together with fathers' occupations enhance vocabulary learning abilities, however mothers' education level and occupations appear to have no measurable impact. Moreover, parental involvement, regardless of socio-economic status, plays a crucial role in shaping children's motivation and English language proficiency. The study provides essential information about how new villagers' socio-economic condition affects English vocabulary development through the combination of family economic level and parent involvement.

3. Methodology

Toward understanding the connection between socio-economic factors and English vocabulary size of new village pupils in Malaysia, this study utilises non-experimental mixed-methods design. It combines both quantitative data collection with qualitative methods through the use of questionnaires and vocabulary size tests and interviews to examine the variables properly. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data throughout the study enables researchers to compare findings which combine parental and pupil perspectives with statistical outcomes related to socio-economic factors and vocabulary acquisition. Research findings from the past validate the effectiveness of mixed methodological approaches to study the complex elements related to language acquisition and socio-economic factors.

This present study analyses primary school pupils from Selangor's new villages in 15 Sekolah Kebangsaan that consist of twelve-year-old pupils. It selected twelve-year-olds because cognitive developmental theories (Piaget, as cited by Malik & Marwaha, 2021) indicate that pupils in this stage develop formal operational capabilities which facilitate their vocabulary expansion. The study area was limited to Selangor because it contains many new villages which make it ideal for examining socio-economic effects on English language acquisition in those settlements. The study design selects subjects through stratified random sampling methods which guarantees equal distribution among different demographic groups. The researchers computed 424 pupils as the required initial target sample size using 95% confidence while setting the margin of error at 5%. The number of participants choosing to participate in this study declined due to COVID-19 restrictions, thus reducing the sample groups to an overall 43 pupils for quantitative analysis and a total of nine participants with five parents and four pupils for qualitative interviews. The researchers applied weighting methods for preserving sample representativeness to establish dependable conclusions about the population.

Data collection relied on three data collection methods which included (i) a modified Chandran and Geetha's (2009) demographic survey for socio-economic data and (ii) Laufer and Nation's (1999) vocabulary size measurement for productive English vocabulary and (iii) semi-structured interviews to explore practices of English learning involvement at home. The study

instruments were conducted online because of COVID-19 to allow participants to participate remotely. A total of 72 fill-in-the-blank items distributed among four vocabulary frequency levels allowed researchers to assess pupils' ability to recognize and use vocabulary in context within the vocabulary test. The study received proper ethical permissions from Universiti Putra Malaysia's Ethics Committee as well as the Ministry of Education, Malaysia before allowing participant involvement. All respondents provided their consent to participate while the study implemented steps to protect confidentiality of their data.

Document validation occurred through concurrent validity because the demographic survey and vocabulary test maintained their credibility in previous studies (Laufer & Nation, 1999; Subon & Unin, 2023; Chandran & Geetha, 2009). The pilot study included 12 participants to check feasibility and reliability which revealed a strong internal consistency measure through its high Pearson's correlation coefficient of 0.918. A professional linguistic expert completed back-to-back translation of the bilingual (English-Bahasa Melayu) questionnaire to ensure language cohesion. Both qualitative data sets required transcription by hand before researchers analysed them through content analysis methods plus open coding, axial coding and selective coding to uncover major themes about parental involvement.

The present study made use of both quantitative and qualitative data analysis approaches. Research data from questionnaires and vocabulary tests underwent descriptive analysis while Pearson's correlation and univariate ANOVA measured the effects of socio-economic factors on vocabulary size assessment scores. The researchers performed data coding followed by thematic analysis of interviews to gain enhanced knowledge about parent-related factors contributing to English vocabulary growth in pupils. Integration of findings from quantitative and qualitative methods delivered comprehensive knowledge about socio-economic conditions which impact English vocabulary acquisition in Malaysia's new villages.

The evaluation combines standardised measurements together with subjective findings through established examination tools to study the cross-effects between socio-economic factors and vocabulary knowledge and parental engagement. Through combined research methods, the study generates an in-depth comprehension of English language difficulties in disadvantaged communities to provide effective guidelines for educational decisions. The research findings with their analysis will be presented in the next section to show how socio-economic factors relate to English vocabulary size among pupils in new village schools throughout Malaysia.

4. Results

Results from the homogeneity of variances test indicated consistent vocabulary size level mean scores for all socio-economic elements, however mothers' education level exhibited notable differences.

Most of the 43 participants identified as Malay and females who used Bahasa Melayu at home (81.4%). The assessment studied parent economic conditions through three factors including educational backgrounds, work occupations and overall financial income. The sample population included majority parents completed the secondary school education level (46.5%), while fathers worked as professionals are more than mothers (30.2% versus 39.5%) with almost half of mothers (44.2%) staying unemployed. The majority (48.8%) of families were classified as B40 low-income group, while M40 represented (34.9%) and T20 (16.3%) accounted for the remaining families.

Vocabulary size analysis of pupils was conducted through word frequency analysis. A substantial number of pupils scored from 50% to 83% at both the 2,000-word and 3,000-word levels yet many achieved marks below 50%. An overwhelming 86% of pupils performed at a rate below 50% at the 5000-word level indicating weak ability to recognize high-frequency words. Vocabulary proficiency at the university word list family level stood at 74.4% below 50% which indicated weak vocabulary skills in pupils at this level. Data indicates that a large number of pupils fail to reach an acceptable competency level in English vocabulary.

The investigation into socio-economic indicators and vocabulary dimensions utilised Univariate ANOVA and Pearson's correlation methods. The study results indicate that vocabulary knowledge does not differ significantly across different parental education levels unless there is a weak connection with paternal education attainment. The vocabulary level of 3,000 words showed a significant correlation between fathers' occupational status where educated professional fathers produced high-performing pupils in vocabulary knowledge. The parental income correlated strongly with vocabulary scores at both 3,000-word and 5,000-word levels because high-income produced better vocabulary results. The analysis using Pearson's correlation method demonstrated minimal yet significant positive relationships between fiscal background and vocabulary size development among pupils.

Additional knowledge emerged from responses of parent and pupil interview about English learning involvement. The interviews produced four essential aspects which included pupil perspectives on English language as well as home learning resources and parental educational assistance and active educational engagement. The pupils together with their parents acknowledged English language proficiency as vital for future prospects which led parents to give motivating support. Parents explained how poor exposure to English at school together with pupils' lack of self-assurance were barriers to their English vocabulary expansion.

Pupils from every economic level obtained books along with electronic educational tools from their parents to boost their English language education. Learning facilities existed even among low-income families because the government established various programmes to make these resources accessible. Higher-income parents delivered supplementary educational benefits to their children because they could afford both tuition expenses and advanced technological resources. Working parents who were less available for assistance because of their work responsibilities caused some children to develop independent learning approaches.

The extent of parental educational assistance depended on their profession as well as their level of education. Parents who stayed home with their children developed better communication skills with their children compared to the weaker communication abilities of working parents who mostly provided superficial supervision. The parents who had received more formal education displayed increased confidence for English language learning of their children but some parents with lower education encountered difficulties in speaking English themselves. All children reported that their parents would successfully maintain their support no matter what background they came from.

School-related involvement between parents and children included performance observation combined with educational interaction as a crucial factor. Parents monitored pupils progress by assessing school reports together with teacher feedback and through checking homework completion. Working parents faced difficulties because of limited available time. Pupils whose mothers did not work received regular school discussions that they can benefit from, but working mothers had less time for such school-related interactions. Learning success depends

on parental engagement which both parents and pupils recognise, although time availability together with the parents' English proficiency levels determined the depth of their involvement. The analysis exposes how variations in social economic conditions affect the sizes of pupils' vocabulary in English language. The analysis established a direct relationship between vocabulary development and total parental income and fathers' education and weaker connections with mothers' education and parents' occupations. Qualitative data verified that parents' attitude, access to learning facilities and parental involvement act as vital elements for steering language development in children. The following section expands on the analysis of the results from this research.

5. Discussion

The Discussion section conducts a complete analysis which explores study data through existing literature studies while answering research objectives. The study examines how socio-economic circumstances influence pupils' vocabulary development alongside with parental engagement during vocabulary acquisition in children. It established several patterns linking community backgrounds to socio-economic factors as well as invalidated particular theoretical ideas about social status effects on second language learning.

Most parents from new villages only completed their education at secondary level and very few of them pursued tertiary education. Jaafar et al. (2019) and Loh (2000) previously established that poverty and early employment were causing excessive pupils' dropouts based on their research. Fathers worked mostly as experienced labourers in manual work, while mothers primarily cared for their children by staying at home and performed unskilled occupations. A transformation from the traditional agricultural sector in new villages has taken place, according to McClymont (2021) and ICOMOS Malaysia New Village Working Group (2022). Many people from the villages work in areas outside their communities due to the new economic circumstances. Most families in the study belonged to the B40 category with their monthly income below MYR 2,500 per month. Past research identified new villages as such lower-income areas. The economic situation partially improved between past decades, yet the financial divide continues to exist.

The results showed that more than half (53%) primary school pupils unable to surpass adequate vocabulary mastery at the 2,000-word, 3,000-word, 5,000-word, and university word list levels. Maamuujav (2021) established that pupils with substantial vocabularies can identify less frequent words, while pupils with restricted vocabularies depend on familiar words. The study validates prior academic work by Wang and Yamat (2019) and Ni et al. (2020) that establishes Malaysian primary school pupils failed to achieve vocabulary mastery according to standard curriculum expectations. Studies conducted by Wong et al. (2019) and Omor Khan and Ariffin (2023) reveal that Malaysian students also face vocabulary acquisition difficulties through their entire educational period from secondary school to university. Primary school pupils residing in new villages struggle to develop their English vocabulary even after receiving at least 6 years of English formal instruction.

The present study revealed the influence of social-economic factors on pupils' vocabulary knowledge. The educational background of mothers and fathers in addition to their occupation failed to demonstrate any meaningful relationship to pupils' vocabulary development. The vocabulary of pupils directly depended on their father's occupation measured at the 3,000-word level since professional fathers showing superior results compared to fathers working in

clerical positions. It is established that greater family income produced larger vocabulary gains in children at both vocabulary tests at 3,000-word and 5,000-word levels.

Study data indicates that the intergenerational-transfer-of-socioeconomic-resources model developed by Davis-Kean et al. (2020) is invalidated due to parental education, occupations and household income are not directly determining child academic growth. The research data invalidates Lyesmaya et al.'s (2022) claim about mothers' educational attainment affecting vocabulary learning in children as well as Atolagbe et al. (2019) who reported how parental occupation affects academic scores. Although parents have limited formal education and low employment status, if they recognize how essential education is therefore, they enable their children to learn.

This study validates previous studies concerning how fathers' occupations and family financial status affect the development of English vocabulary in children. The analysis by Shah and Hussain (2021) demonstrated that fathers who are professionals offer their children exposure to complex vocabulary which corresponds to the findings of this study. Butler and Le (2018) proved that higher family income enables parents to invest in additional education tools which includes private tutors and English language tuition. In their work, Mohamad et al. (2023) revealed that poor families face financial obstacles in helping their children to learn English.

The study presented a weak positive connection between household income and vocabulary growth which means that other external components such as learning environment and motivation, probably matter more in vocabulary development. Language exposure at home acts as a primary factor in vocabulary development according to Levine et al. (2020) while primary school pupils mainly acquire new vocabulary through contextual learning as per Rosa et al. (2022). The study aimed to investigate the effects of parental involvement on children's vocabulary growth as its goal. It produced four fundamental findings about English attitudes and learning conditions at home alongside parental learning assistance and school involvement of parents.

Both parents and their children recognise English is essential because it unlocks career doors and digitization knowledge. The lack of motivation stood out as a crucial problem because pupils experience decreased motivation due to insufficient exposure and practical experience of the language. Extrinsic motivation particularly defined as parents' approval enhances language acquisition, according to Pham (2021), while Shengyao et al. (2024) showed that this external factor may weakens over time without intrinsic motivation. This study findings corroborates Aziz and Kashinatha's (2021) and Gultom and Oktaviani's (2022) studies who documented that Malaysian English language learner's lack speaking confidence in English and their language performance is positively associated with poor self-esteem.

The basic materials for learning existed in every socio-economic family, yet families from higher socio-economic backgrounds obtained added resources such as digital books and online educational classes. Parents with lower income chose to promote communication skills between themselves and their children, while both parents who work spent less time participating directly in their children's education. Korat et al. (2014) established in their study that technology-based educational programmes benefit pupils from lower income groups. Ashcraft (2023) supported this finding by asserting that pupils need constant language exposure to build their vocabulary.

Learning techniques implemented by parents also depended on their financial standing. Parents who worked outside the home fostered their children to learn independently, yet mothers who stayed home provided active educational support. The parents with greater education levels displayed comfort in helping their children, while parents with low education faced difficulties in the English language. All children showed assurance about their parents' capability to support them academically. The study finding of Zhou (2020) demonstrates that parents with advanced degrees give better language supports to their children, as well as Mohd Satar et al. (2020) who discovered that working parents participate less in hands-on education, but make up for it through financial assistance provided.

All parents used teacher feedback and homework review to track their children's educational achievements. Although working parents had limited school meeting attendance because of their time commitments, they still participated through parental involvement. The findings from Yulianti et al. (2018) differ because they observed higher-educated parents showed more frequent school collaboration. It showed that education level and household income did not determine parental interest in school activities because all parents shared similar levels of involvement.

The study indicates a complicated system linking social economic situations to parent participation in school activities with vocabulary development of pupils in English. It demonstrated that total parental income and fathers' occupations influenced complex vocabulary development, while mothers' education and occupations stood as insignificant factors. The engagement of parents in children's language learning strongly influenced both motivation patterns and learning resource access. Time limitations and parents' English language proficiency influenced the level of their participation in their children's education. The study provides fresh insights to existing research about how socio-economic factors and parental support interact in the development of children's English vocabulary.

6. Conclusion

The study unveils economic as well as social factors which impede primary school pupils in Malaysian new villages from acquiring English vocabulary proficiently. It identifies important socio-economic factors and parental engagement dynamics which leads to practical recommendations for policymakers, educators and higher-ups can implement. The effective resolution of these obstacles needs integrated operational strategies between financial support initiatives and both educational efforts for parents and community-based intervention methods to establish equal learning possibilities. Future studies should examine long-term effects of socio-economic factors, while analysing additional influencing variables which include digital proficiency levels and peer group expectations for language acquisition.

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