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**Teachers' Readiness Profile in Implementing
Curriculum Innovation**

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Indonesia University of Education



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SOCIAL CULTURAL BACKGROUND: WHAT IMPACTS DOES IT HAVE ON STUDENTS' EFL LEARNING?

Nihta V. F. Liando

Abstract

This study investigates the social cultural backgrounds that presumably influence high school students' performance as they study English as a foreign language (EFL) subject in school. Social cultural backgrounds in this context were measured through the social economic status of parents, parental influence scale adapted from Gardner (1985), family influence scale and social orientation scale (Clement & Kruidenier, 1983). 149 students from two different high schools participated in the self-reported questionnaire. The high schools were purposely chosen in order to cover different range of socio economic status. Results showed that the social cultural backgrounds, in general, did not directly influence students' academic achievement in English subject. However, students admitted that to some extent, socio economic status and parents' influence played a significant role to be successful in learning English.

Key words: socio-economic status (SES), parental influence, EFL

Introduction

It has long been argued that an individual's social cultural background is important in supporting successful language learning (Clement & Kruidenier, 1983; Gardner, Masgoret, & Tremblay, 1999; Hall, 1977; Oh & Au, 2005). Studies which have investigated the relationship between social cultural background and language learning have focused on a range of aspects such as social cultural orientation, socio-

economic status, and parental encouragement in both high school and university contexts. For example, within the high school context, in their Canadian study of investigating different orientations to second language acquisition of 871 grade 11 students in different groups, Clement and Kruidenier (1983) identified knowledge, friendship, and travel orientations as important factors. In addition, they also identified social cultural orientation

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which was found to be important in a foreign language context.

In the university context, a study by Gardner, et al. (1999) investigated the influence of social cultural milieu of the learner and the individual difference variables involved in learning a second language. In so doing, they assessed the nature of 109 first year university students' linguistic home community, their recollections of early experiences in second language learning and their beliefs and attitudes about language learning and bilingualism through surveys. The findings indicated that social cultural experiences influenced students' cultural attitudes, motivation to learn a second language, and self perceptions of second language proficiency. Oh and Au (2005) investigated social cultural background variables such as cultural identification, cultural participation, and use of Spanish outside the classroom that contributed to successful language learning involving 55 Latino college students' learning Spanish. The findings suggested that these social cultural background variables related to the mastery of Spanish pronunciation and grammar. In the following sections some of the specific social cultural factors including socio-economic status (SES) and parental encouragement are examined.

There is a large body of educational research on socio-economic status (SES) (Bornstein & Bradley, 2003; Brooks-Gunn, Denner, & Klebanov, 1995; Coleman, 1988; Lamdin, 1996; McLoyd, 1998; Sutton & Soderstrom, 1999). Several of these studies suggest

that socio-economic status (SES) is a factor predicting students' academic performance (Lamdin, 1996; Sutton & Soderstrom, 1999). Early contributors to research in this field include Eysenck (1935), Sanders (1948), and Hohne (1949). Their research findings suggested that factors such as difficult home conditions or financial problems contributed to failure in university examinations. Following their research, Caiden (1964) reviewed research investigating students' failure in Australian universities and identified factors affecting failure. Her findings indicated that there was a relationship between parental occupation and student performance at university. She concluded that students' socio-economic background was one factor contributing to failure. Similarly, Capoor's (1982) study of the nurse education program at Middlesex County College (MCC) New Jersey, which focused on the relationship between student background and performance and between student performance in their course work, indicated that employment status of parents was significantly related to course performance.

Using census data, Grosset and Hawk (1986) identified seven economic and social indicators of SES such as per-capita income and household income. They reported that in most analyses of the correlations there was a positive significant correlation between SES indices and academic performance. Similarly, Cooper and Tom (1984) reviewed 43 studies which compared different ethnic groups and socio-

economic status. One of their conclusions was "a stronger need for achievement is associated with higher SES" (p. 221). They indicated that 13 of the 17 studies they reviewed supported this conclusion. Sorensen's (1994) study which discussed issues about education and success in South Korea, claimed that social background, in this case, family or parents' socio-economic status, was significantly related to the children's educational level. He argued that SES together with the pressure from parents and authoritarian teachers, motivates students to score well in both national exams for high school and college admission. Marks, McMillan and Hillman (2001) examined the tertiary entrance performance of Australian students in Year 12 in 1998 using data from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) project. One of the findings indicated that socio-economic backgrounds influenced students' academic performance.

The findings from studies conducted over the past six years (since 2000) have also indicated a positive relationship between parents' socio-economic backgrounds and their children's achievement. For example, following the state-wide implementation of the Minnesota Basic Skills Tests, the University of Minnesota (2002) conducted a study examining emerging educational trends in Minnesota. Data consisted of demographic and test score information from 1996-2001 for all 8th grade students taking the regular administration of the mathematics and

reading Basic Skills Tests. One of the findings indicated that students from low-income families had lower test scores than their counterparts who did not come from low income backgrounds. The findings of a recent study by Davis-Kean (2005) also suggested that children's academic achievement was related to socio-economic factors through parents' belief and behaviours.

A meta-analysis conducted by Sirin (2005) supported the findings of the relationships between socio-economic status and students' achievement. Sirin reviewed the literature on socio-economic status and academic achievement published in journal articles from 1990 to 2000. Although there was a slight decrease in the average correlation, the findings showed a medium to strong relationship between SES and academic achievement. Sirin proposed several implications for future research in testing the complex nature of SES and achievement relationships. These included that future research has to assess students' SES as part of their understanding of family effects on academic performance, and to consider neighbourhood characteristics as part of the assessment of students' socio-economic backgrounds.

The studies presented in this section have shown that socio-economic status (SES) of parents is significantly related to students' academic performance. However, none of the studies investigating this topic, has looked specifically at the relationships between SES and ESL/EFL learning which this current study is investigating.

Furthermore, much of this research has been undertaken in Western contexts and further research needs to be conducted in less economically developed situations in order to understand the impact of SES on English as a foreign language learning in a country like Indonesia.

In addition to SES, parental behaviours were also identified as another important factor which contributes to the success of second or foreign language learning. In the next section the influence of parents on language learning is discussed.

According to LeBlanc (1997) positive perceptions of language learning in the community, especially among parents, are one of the fundamental elements supporting second language learning. Ryan, Stiller and Lynch (1994, p. 231) argued that "the quality of relatedness depicted in parental representations may influence the motivational and affective resources a child brings to the classroom." A number of studies have suggested that parents play an influential role over their children's learning of a second or foreign language. For example, in a number of Gardner's studies, parental encouragement was found to be significantly correlated with students' motivation in learning a second language (Gardner, 1983, 1990; Gardner, et al., 1999; Gardner, et al., 1974). Other studies that used the AMTB and included parental encouragement as a variable also indicated the important role of parents towards students' success in learning a foreign language (i.e.

Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 1994; Haque, 1989; Lai, 1999; Laine, 1978; Ratelle, Larose, Guay, & Senecal, 2005; Renza-Guren, 2001; Ryan, et al., 1994; Schnabel, Alfeld, Eccles, Koller, & Baumert, 2002; Sung & Padila, 1998).

Donitsa-Schmidt, Inbar, and Shohamy (2004) investigated whether changes in the educational context of teaching Arabic as a second language in Israeli schools affected students' attitudes towards the language, its speakers and culture, and motivation to study the language. A questionnaire was distributed to 692 students who were grouped into experimental and control groups based on whether they studied spoken Arabic. One of the findings indicated that the parents' role was confirmed as an important predictor of students' motivation to learn Arabic.

Tremblay and Gardner (1995) investigated the relationships among various additional measures of motivation such as persistence, attention, goal specificity, and causal attribution with each other. This study involved 75 students in a francophone secondary school who completed a range of motivational and attitudinal measures such as persistence, attention, goal specificity, and causal attribution. The findings from motivational measures showed that students' language learning achievement was influenced by the roles of parents and teachers, while findings from implementation of the additional motivational measures improved understanding of motivation in language learning. In Chou's (2005) study, the impact of parental encouragement and

support was also examined. The findings suggested that parental encouragement had a significant influence on the children's achievement and motivation in studying English where those who received more support and parental encouragement scored higher on *Attitudes toward Learning English* and self-reported English proficiency.

In summary, the findings of previous studies has found that social cultural background including socio-economic status, and parental encouragement was significantly positively correlated with students' English academic performance. This study aims at conducting a further examination in order to explore whether these factors correlate with academic performance in the context of Indonesia to provide a better understanding of the relationships which determine the success of language learning.

Method

There were 149 students from 2 high schools, one state high school (SMU Negeri 9 Manado) and one private school (SMU Kristen Eben Haezar Manado), in a provincial city in Indonesia participated in this study. The students were in the final year of high school, studying in one of three different programs: 1) the natural sciences program, 2) the social sciences program, or 3) the languages program. The schools were selected to be representative of a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds with students from SMU Negeri 9 Manado (SMU N9) representing lower and middle class groups, while students from

SMU Kristen Eben Haezar Manado (SMU KEH) represented the upper class group. Fifty male students (28 SMUN9 and 22 SMU Kr EH) and 99 female ones (62 SMU9 and 37 SMU Kr EH) participated in this study.

Questionnaire was used to obtain data for this study. Part one requested personal background information such as name, class, gender, parents' occupation and income. To obtain information regarding social cultural background several scales were used, such as Gardner's parental influence scale (9 items) which was used to measure the influence of parents, social orientation scale (4 items) by Clement and Kruidenier (1983) and 3 items were created for family influence scale.

To be sure that comprehension of the questions was not a problem, the questionnaire was constructed using a parallel bilingual format, Indonesian and English, allowing students simultaneous access to both language versions of each question. This helped to ensure that any unfamiliar concepts and vocabulary in one language were available in the other. The students were asked to respond to each question on each scale by rating the Likert-type five-point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1, Disagree (D) = 2, Neutral (N) = 3, Agree (A) = 4, and Strongly Agree (SA) = 5. The minimum score was 1 and the maximum was 5. Of the 204 questionnaires distributed, 149 or 73 percent were returned, with the returns rate being higher at SMU N 9 (60.4 percent) than at SMU KEH (59 or 39.6 percent):

In addition to the questionnaire, information related to students' academic performance in English subject was also collected. The academic performance measure was the English subject grades (in this case the score ranges from 1=the worst to 10=the best) from the first semester that were collected from the English teachers as the best measured available of the students' English academic performance.

H1 = M SMU KEH > M SMU N9 based on Social Economic Status (SES) This study also shows that the mean of female students' grades is slightly higher than those of male students. This confirms the previous showing that girls were better at languages subject.

H1 = M F > M M

Item – scale analysis and factor analysis were performed on each of the scales (parental influence, social orientation, family influence. The overall

Table 1. Grades by Gender and School

Gender	SMU N 9	SMU KEH	Total
Male	M = 5.75 SD = 1.005 N = 28	M = 7.00 SD = 1.024 N = 22	M = 6.30 SD = 1.182 N = 50
Female	M = 5.81 SD = 1.069 N = 62	M = 7.30 SD = 0.939 N = 37	M = 6.36 SD = 1.249 N = 99
Total	M = 5.79 SD = 1.044 N = 90	M = 7.19 SD = 0.973 N = 59	M = 6.34 SD = 1.223 N = 149

Table 1 shows that the grades of students in SMU KEH which represented upper class group higher than those of SMU N9 students which represented middle and lower class group.

alpha reliability for the three scales ranges from .719 to .825. The average inter-item correlations show that the scales have good internal consistency reliability. Table 2 shows the average of inter-item correlations among the variables:

Table 2. Internal consistency reliability

Scale	Ave. inter-item correlation	Alpha
Social orientation (N=4)	.398	.719
Parental Influence (N=9)	.314	.800
Family Influence (N=3)	.624	.825

Result and Discussion

Participants Background

The participants in this study came from three different programs in high school. Sixty-nine participants were from IPA, 39 from IPB and 41 from IPS programs.

The distribution of participants in each study program based on gender and school is shown in the following tables.

In all study programs, the number of female students is higher than the number of male ones with percentage of 66.44 percent and 33.56 percent, respectively.

Table 3. Participants based on Study Programs

	N	Percent
SMU-IPA(Natural Sciences)	69	46.3%
SMU-IPB (Languages)	39	26.2%
SMU-IPS (Social sciences)	41	27.5%
Total	149	100.0%

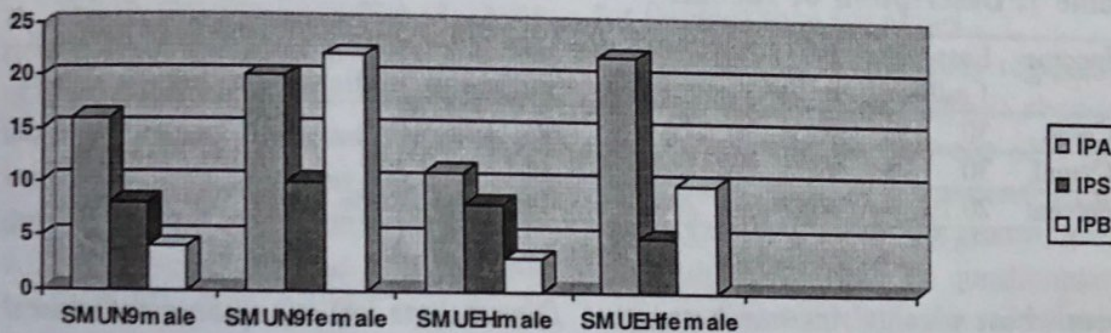


Figure 1. Participants based on study programs, school and gender

Table 4. Students from IPA (Natural Sciences Program)

Gender	SMU N 9	SMU KEH	Total
Male	16	11	27
Female	20	22	42
Total	36	33	69

Table 5. Students from IPS (Social Sciences Program)

Gender	SMU N 9	SMU KEH	Total
Male	8	8	16
Female	20	5	25
Total	28	13	41

Table 6. Students from IPB (Languages Program)

Gender	SMU N 9	SMU KEH	Total
Male	4	3	7
Female	22	10	32
Total	26	13	39

Based on the income of parents per month, there were 134 students whose parents' income was under 3 million rupiahs per month and only 15 whose parents' income was more than three million rupiahs per month. Three million rupiahs is equal to AUD 500. Among these 134 students, there were 67 of

orientation, parental influence, and family influence scales and their academic performance. At first, the mean of each scale including all cases was performed. This was done to have a general description of how the data was distributed.

Table 7. Description of Income

Income	Less than 1 million	1.01 – 2 million	2.01 – 3 million	3.01 – 4 million	4.01 – 5 million	5.01 – 6 million	Over 6 million
Count	30	67	37	6	4	2	3
Cumul.	30	97	134	140	144	146	149
Percent	20.1%	45.0%	24.8%	4%	2.7%	1.3%	2%

them whose parents' income between 1 – 2 million rupiah per month. Details are in the following table.

Ninety-nine percents of the participants use Manadonese dialect as their home language and only about 15 percent of the participants can speak one of any local languages in Minahasa.

Social cultural backgrounds and academic performance

Pearson product moment correlation was performed in order to examine the correlation among variables establish whether there was a significant correlation between social cultural backgrounds represented in social

Discussion: Impact of Social Cultural Backgrounds on Students' EFL Learning

The results from this study suggest that social cultural background variables were highly correlated with motivational variables, such as parental encouragement with integrative motivation, ($r = 0.179, p > 0.01$), social orientation with integrative motivation ($r = 0.268, p > 0.01$), or social orientation with instrumental orientation ($r = 0.475, p > 0.01$). These results suggest that overall, the findings in this study showed that parents and other family members such as siblings appeared to provide motivational support for the study of

Table 8 Correlation matrix with mean (M) and standard deviations (SD)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sex								
Income			-.164*	1.00				
Grades	6.34	1.22	.025	.057	1.00			
SORIENT	3.34	.643	.088	-.089	.113	1.00		
PARIENF	3.65	.50	.071	.055	.024	.420**	1.00	
FAMINF	3.52	.94	.138	-.009	-.084	.232**	.358**	1.00

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

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

English. Social orientation such as strengthening their reputation in their community or gaining more respect through having a knowledge of English also correlated with motivation to learn English.

When the background of these students was further analysed in terms of their environment, results showed that the high schools involved in this study were located in a provincial city where the students predominantly grew up in a city-environment and both parents were usually working. The statistics of parents' occupation showed that more than 70 percent of the mothers of high school students were working compared to less than 40 percent of the mothers of university students. This might be a contributing factor to high school students reporting less parental influence.

Family influence was also more important for females than for male respondents across all groups. This indicated that female adolescents took more notice of family influence than males, especially at the critical stage of late adolescence. According to the traditional practices in this province,

which could also reflect those for the rest of the country, there is a greater expectation for female children to stay at home and perform house duties, thus providing a possible explanation why family influence was more significant for females than for males.

The results of this study regarding socio-economic status (SES) showed that the correlation between SES and academic achievement was consistently non-significant across the groups. Even when the data from the questionnaire were verified through the interviews, almost all respondents (students and teachers) believed strongly that SES was not related to students' academic achievement. This finding was unexpected because participants in this study came from different socio-economic backgrounds, yet had similar opinions on this matter.

However, within the high school groups, the academic achievement of students in SMU KEH was significantly higher than those of SMU N9. As indicated in the previous section, this result was not surprising as SMU KEH and SMU N9 were purposively chosen in terms of their social cultural

background. SMU KEH, a private high school, represented families with higher socio-economic status while SMU N9, a public school, was selected to represent middle to low socio-economic status groups. This finding supports those of Jimenez and Lockheed (1995) who summarised the results of a World Bank research project comparing private and public schools in five developing countries. While there was a significant overlap between private school groups and public school groups regarding family background, one of their findings was that students in private schools outperformed students in public schools on a range of achievement tests. This finding was supported by those in this study as the students from SMU KEH had significantly higher scores for their

academic achievement ($M = 7.19$ out of 10) than those of SMU N9 students ($M = 5.79$ out of 10). As noted in the previous section, the SES results may have been confounded by different English language program emphases in the two schools.

These findings showed that social cultural background influenced students' motivation in learning English as a foreign language, while parents' socio-economic status may also have been a positive influence on students' academic achievement. These findings are significant because the influence of social cultural backgrounds in this Indonesian context contrasts with the results found in previous studies which were predominantly in a Western context.

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