

How Socio-Economic Status Contributes To Parents' Views On English Teaching For Young Learners

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HOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS CONTRIBUTES TO PARENTS' VIEWS ON ENGLISH TEACHING FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

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Abstract: This study aims at identifying the contribution of parents' socio-economic status (SES) toward their views on the teaching English for children. A survey technique with questionnaires and interviews was utilized to collect the data from 245 parents as the respondents. SPSS with Predictive Analysis Software (PASW) statistics 18 has been employed to analyze the collected data. Descriptively, the researcher found that parents with different SES have showed similar beliefs on the importance of English mastery. They made a commitment to keep supporting their children with English. It was also found that although their knowledge on EYL was limited, their views and attitudes were good. Statistically, it showed that parents' social and economic status either in their education, occupation, or income and their views on EYL were not significantly correlated. It came to the conclusion that parents today have equal vision in preparing their children with good education.

Keywords: *parents' socio-economic status (SES), parents views, English for children*

INTRODUCTION

The issue of English language teaching in Indonesian Elementary schools is still debatable since it has been excluded from the 2013 curriculum. English at elementary schools is recommended to be inserted in extracurricular activities. According to Zacharias (2013), when English at elementary school was scraped from the national curriculum, eventually the opportunity to acquire English

formally for young learners is restricted. Learning two or three languages at the same time, based on the government assumption, was not effective. Thus, English should not be taught at elementary school before the students master Indonesian. The arguments seem to contradict psychological point of views which stated that teaching English at early age actually was not worrying at all. The children's brain has been created in such a way so that it could process any ⁵formation. Halliwell (1992), for example, says that young learners come to the language classroom are already equipped with set of instincts, skills and characteristics, which will make them easy to learn a ⁶ew language.

Parents are the ⁶first and ongoing educators of their own children. They have an opportunity to express their views and take them into account on their own policy matters affecting the education of their children. The survey which is conducted by Lee (2011) involving 40 parents in Korea reveals that their understanding on the ⁹importance of English in globalisation era, has made parents aware of teaching English to young learners earlier in order to reach the proficiency. The small-scale survey carried out by Djiwandono (2005) which involved 46 student parents who have children studying at a private language course 'V' in Malang were parents who fear that without extra English course, their children would have problems of understanding the lesson from school. In addition, they also realized that providing English course for their children at early age was positively perceived for them. This finding seemed to be similar to the research done in Korea which had found that Korean parents preferred to send their children in primary school where the English is officially taught (Song, 2011).

From the data above, it seems to indicate that the parents in many countries generally considered learning English from the early age is a positive way to help their children build momentum for a better life. The research which was conducted by the division of Government Information Office of Taiwan in 2006 has stated that most of the parents had positive views towards the early language

Harmanto, How Socio-Economic Status Contributes to Parents' Views on English Teaching for Young Learners

learning. They made a commitment to keep supporting the English learning even from the very young age (Griva & Chouvarda, 2012). Chang (2008) in another occasion also found that most Taiwanese parents believe in the early start of language learning will give better results for their children. In Chinese context, it was discovered that English which was as a required subject for the students and had to be introduced at earlier levels has played positively role in preparing children in the context of globalization (Butler, 2013).

Based on the foregoing discussions, it could be depicted that most of the researches tend to be directed to the effect of parents' SES and education level toward their children academic achievement and competence. In other words, the positive correlation between family' SES and children's achievement is well-established in various contexts. In the context of EFL, it might be also important to investigate whether parents' SES has positive impact to their views on preparing their children because of Indonesian parents awareness toward their children future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Possibility of English Teaching to Young Learners

From the psychological point of view, teaching English at early age actually was not worrying at all. The children's brain has been created in such a way so that it could progress any information. Halliwell (1992) says that young learners come to the language classroom are already equipped with set of instincts, skills and characteristics, which will make them easy to learn a new language. According to a psychology professor Fred Genesee of McGill University in Montreal recently, children's brains are considerably more flexible and adaptable to learning everything (Power, 2013). In addition, Zacharias (2010) states that LAD or a language instinct works the same way as a child is learning a second language provided that is stimulated by appropriate sociocultural contexts where language sits. Scott and Ytreberg (1990) suggested that learning English to young learners should be effective with fun ways, not

underpressure. Young children are usually full of enthusiasm and energy. These opinions, therefore, will be able to encounter the question of some education experts who still disagree with the policy of teaching English at the early age. Finally, writer thinks that the possibility of the English teaching to young learners at elementary schools is good when it is conducted properly and suitable with the nature of childhood world.

Advantages of Early Language Learning

Some people have acknowledged that early language learning is advantageous linguistically and cognitively for children. Dinçay (2011) clearly stated that learning a new language at any age, of course, will give different experience in many aspects. When language learning exposed more experiences for all ages, children will automatically reach a wonderful outcome. Quite simply, the earlier the learning starts, the widest possible set of benefits and opportunities will be. Similarly, Johnstone (2009) also outlines that early start is principle advantageous because it allows a longer time overall for learning; it allows children to learn naturally as young children but then to learn more analytically as older children as they grow up; as such, it gives learners the opportunity to integrate and further develop these different sorts of learning experience. For further clarity, Clarke (2009) argues that babies need faces and voices to listen to and focus on during the first twelve months of life. They also need an early interaction as basis for communication with others and for learning in both the home language and English as a second language. In this step, ongoing development of language will be established.

As children grow older, this advantage continues and grows. According to Cameron (2001), children's curiosity and eagerness to make sense of the world was already gotten when they involved in language learning. They also have an enthusiasm and a willingness to tackle the most demanding tasks given. Their confidence and their desire for new discoveries may be boosted by the ease and pleasure of

the experience due to children are at the stage of a special 'window of opportunity' in which language learning is intuitive and natural. The children is able to speak smoothly and confidently by starting early (Dinçay, 2011). Therefore, to acquire more advantages from the early language learning, every teacher or language educator has to learn the children characteristics from the psychological aspects.

A great number of outstanding scholars have contributed in viewing the possibility of teaching languages to young learners. Patel and Jain (2008), for example, assume that adopting the development of psychology in education philosophy field makes a teaching and learning at early age very effective and scientific. In understanding the children characteristics, he referred to three outstanding scholars; Piaget, Vygotsky, and Brunner. Piaget (1970) illustrates the child as active scientist in accomplishing developmental milestones by experimenting on its environment. The Russian theorist, Lev Vygotsky (1962), then sees the role of interaction with more knowledgeable partners in developing child's learning by talking while playing, reading stories, and asking questions. Children can do more than they can do on their own with the help of adults. The concept zone of proximal development (ZPD) he developed points out that the child cannot do alone, but can nearly do. With this ZPD, the learner can do something more and more independently. In addition, Bruner (1976) emphasizes the importance of language in children's cognitive growth and develops the nature of mediation which is popular with 'scaffolding'. When the children fail to make a sense of language, adults use all-important talk to help them find out its meaning through the children world.

Parents' Views on Their Children's English

Although children grow in the countries where English is their foreign or second language, a globalization wave has made their parents' awareness on the importance of English teaching for their children. To anticipate these global changes, the Ministry of Education (MOE) of Singapore, for example, has released some

fundamental programs concerning the English literacy for children (MOE, 2013). With the slogan 'equipping with English language skills to our children from young is very important', they intend to increase the existing literacy assistance efforts at the kindergarten level, to about 100 up to 250 more pre-school centers today. This condition shows an improvement for the children to face the globalized era.

Another example happened in Ontario schools in which every day more than one million English language learners go to Ontario's publicly funded schools to learn English in order to be able to compete successfully in a global community. By attending the schools, their parent expects their children to achieve the progress that they could not be achieved in other schools. Through shared responsibility, the schools are able to optimize the synergies within the schools, the parent community, and supporting community partners to make all English language learners able to achieve their potential fully (The Ontario Curriculum, 2001). Parents play a critical role in making the program successful. This educational reforms will ensure a more inclusive process of globalization in developed and developing countries alike in the future (Woessmann, 2011). Therefore, parents should consider wisely expecting their children to learn English as happened in other Asian countries like China and Taiwan.

Basically, two theories can be verified for the present study dealing with the role of parent: The theory of investment and good parent. According to Mayer (2002), the investment theory talks about how parents invest both time and money for their children particularly by investing in their education, as a 'human capital'. They purchase health, good neighbors, and others to improve children's future well-being. Their investment in their children is determined by their ability to finance investments which is influenced by their income and their access to capital. Their willingness to invest in their children is also influenced by their own values and norms. Thus variation of parents' expectation depends on how much their income spends on their children. Children whose parents cannot buy them

Harmanto, How Socio-Economic Status Contributes to Parents' Views on English Teaching for Young Learners

some basic material needs to get the skills that help them succeed will lose in competition.

Meanwhile 'good parent' theories tell us that parents' low income to invest in their children does not fully reduces parents' ability to be 'good' parents. In helping their children succeed, parents can use two versions of 'good parent' theory; parental stress and role model. The 'parental stress' version describes the condition of children in poverty which reduce parents' ability to be supportive, consistent, and involved with them. Children social and emotional development will be disrupted in the with poor parenting which finally limits their educational and social opportunities. In addition, the 'role model' version emphasizes on how parents interact with their children. Eventhough they are in low-income, their parents develop value norms, and behaviors to support them for the success. Since the deviant values help reduce stress, or for reasons that have little to do with stress, parents' values, attitudes, and behavior must change.

Parents' SES and Views on English for Their Children

When people identify the effect of parental socioeconomic status (SES), sometimes they tend to mean the effect of parental SES attributes and all its contexts. According to Mayer (2002), parental SES is related to the factors of income, level of education, and occupation. Therefore, the present research tries to identify the effect of parents' educational background, parents' income, and parents' occupation toward parents' views to equip their children with English. Benjamin (2014) justifies that the family socioeconomic status can play a very important role in thier children education. SES affects what opportunities children will be exposed to. Children in parents low SES will have limited opportunities to perform rather than they are with parents higher SES. Families with a better socioeconomic status usually have parents who are well educated, and are therefore better prepared to help their child in tasks for school. According to him, the type of life in the United States today was mainly

determined by the factor of unfortunate socioeconomic status. An educated child, privileged life, or one of struggles and educational difficulties will be led by the economic status. This is not to show that children who are growing up in a poor family will never obtain a better education, or that a wealthier child must be successful. The idea of this discussion is to prove the inequalities of the educational system to the community by stressing that SES can be a determiner and play significantly in education in the United States.

Based on this review, it can be said that the initiative to teach English at the early age is not contradictory with the psychological principles and linguistics theories. The teaching will be effective with some conditions such as students should be taught by conducting experiments on the environment. Their learning should also be developed through interaction with more knowledgeable persons. Most of them do not perceive any disadvantages of the early language learning. Additionally, family's SES status and children education are intercorrelated. Parents SES can often have significant effects on their views due to differences in ability in managing the information they accessed that potentially influence to categorize their status into high, middle, or low SES.

METHOD

The main purpose of the paper was to explore parents' views on equipping their children with English with regard to their different socio-economic status (SES). Therefore, this study used a survey research design. It is typically used to describe opinion, attitude, preferences, and perceptions of people of interest to the researcher (Latief, 2011). Taking into the objective of this study into account, this research used purposive sampling based on information available on the socioeconomic status of parents from the students attending particular elementary schools. The targeted samples of research were 250 students' parents.

In collecting the data, close-ended questionnaires consisting of fifteen questions were distributed. This design was used in order to

Harmanto, How Socio-Economic Status Contributes to Parents' Views on English Teaching for Young Learners

restrict their responses by providing them options to choose. The questionnaire was of two parts. The first part, which encompassed three questions, tried to obtain the data on parents' socio-economic status (SES), while the second part (or eight questions) was used to achieve the information on parents' views on EYL. Items for the parents' views scale were adapted from Griva & Chouvarda (2012). The variable in the survey together with its definition covered 1) parents' SES covering three angles of parents' education, parents' income, and parents' occupation; and 2) parents' views on EYL consisting of parents' views on the reasons of learning English for children, the function of introducing English to children, the positive impact of EYL, the judgement of EYL implementation, the necessity of equipping their children with English, personal attitude toward the existence of EYL, expected prerequisites for EYL introduction, and parent's experience to the implementation of EYL.

To analyze data, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics method were used. Descriptive statistics was used to categorize the data of parents' views on EYL into three groups: good, fair, and poor, as well as to classify the parents' socio-economic status into three groups: lower, middle, and high. To make simpler and visual way in understanding the results, the use of graphs and charts was used. Meanwhile, to describe the contribution of parents' views to their ways in equipping their children on English, it was analyzed using cross-tabulation. Furthermore, to find out the correlation between variables and to determine if the result was positive or negative, inferential statistic was used. Thus, it is designed to assess a correlation between parents' SES and parents' views on EYL. The elements of parents' SES included the parents' occupation, education, and financial status. Their responses then were correlated with their grades to draw the conclusion. The Predictive Analysis Software (PASW) statistics version 18 for Windows was used to analyze the data in this study. This software was one of the SPSS program packages .

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data had been collected, the research found some evidences that answer the research question about the contribution of parents SES in forming their views on the teaching English to young learners. Table 1 shows that 60% of parents had a good view - 29.8% of them were from middle class and 26.5% from lower class, and 3.7% was from upper class.

Table 1 the percentage of parents' SES and views

		Category of Views			Total
		poor	fair	good	
SES Category	Lower	1 ,4%	56 22,9%	65 26,5%	122 49,8%
	Middle	2 ,8%	31 12,7%	73 29,8%	106 43,3%
	Upper	1 ,4%	7 2,9%	9 3,7%	17 6,9%
Total		4 1,6%	94 38,4%	147 60,0%	245 100,0%

Regarding to the aspect of the necessity of equipping their children with English, as Table 2 shows, it was clear that the majority of parents disagreed that they wanted their children learning English because of the forced government regulation. They might want to do it because of their own awareness. They also disagreed that they wanted their children to learn English because they had established living status. They might be because of their understanding of the today's global demand. In addition, they disagreed that they wanted their children to learn English because they belonged to the middle upper social economic status. Again, it means that they wanted to do it because of their own initiation. They disagreed with the statement that they wanted their children to learn English because they suffered unhappy experience of learning it but of the real needs.

Harmanto, How Socio-Economic Status Contributes to Parents' Views on English Teaching for Young Learners

Table 2 the necessity of equipping their children with English

Indicators	Disagree	Agree
The obliging regulation	226 (92,2%)	19 (7,8%)
Having established living status	239 (97,6%)	6 (2,4%)
Belonging to middle upper social economic status	237 (96,7%)	8 (3,3%)
The unhappy past experience	186 (75,9%)	59 (24,1%)
For preparing the global demand	10 (4,1%)	235 (95,9%)
Make it easier to teaching children	32 (13,1%)	213 (86,9%)

In terms of personal attitude toward the existence of EYL, Table 3 indicates that the majority of parents disagreed that with English mastery at the early age would destroy the children to learn Indonesian language well. They were sure that their children was able to master more than one language in the same time. Regarding to the worrying about the patriotism disturbance, most of the parents viewed that giving English to children would disturb the Indonesian patriotism. They also disagreed with the notion of the learning English would overload the children with the material. They did not have any objection with the teaching English for young learners at all.

However, the majority of parents agreed that they wanted their children learning English because they wanted to prepare them to the global demand. They relaized their children to learn English early because they were still easy to guide. They knew well the best period for preparing their children with English.

As what Djwandono (2005) stated, parents' attitude toward a possible threat to the national language might be caused either by their desire to have their children be identified with English-speaking cultures, or the belief that the use of Indonesian language has been so firmly embodied in their children that early learning of English will not in any way endanger the national language.

Dinçay (2011) clearly stated that the learning a new language at any age can give much more experience in many ways. Children will be able to achieve maximal result from this wonderful learning adventure. In other words, start learning earlier tends to offer more advantages and opportunities. Similarly, Johnstone (2009), also

¹ outlines an early start was in principle advantageous, because it allows a longer time overall for learning; it allows children to learn naturally as young children but then to learn more analytically as older children as they grow up; as such, it gives learners the opportunity to integrate and further develop these different sorts of learning experience.

Table 3 personal attitude toward the existence of EYL

Indicators	Disagree	Agree
Worrying about the interference of English to the Indonesian language mastery	213 (86,9%)	32 (13,1%)
Worrying about the patriotism disturbance	218 (89,0%)	27 (11,0%)
Worrying about the students' learning load	219 (89,4%)	26 (10,6%)

In relation to the expected prerequisites for EYL introduction, Table 4 clearly shows that most of the parents agreed that EYL teachers should use a new technology in their teaching. They wanted EYL teachers should provide a comfortable and supportive learning environment in English teaching and learning to create the classroom instruction which made children enjoy the learning. The EYL teachers were demanded to be able to teach English by playing. In the teaching process, they were expected to treat their students equally. they were forbidden to behave unfair to their students. They agreed that they wanted the EYL teachers should not teach their students under psychological pressure. It means that the EYL teachers had to create the classroom climate which guarantee the students' safety and security.

Many studies have dealt with the investigation to find out the factors affecting the ineffectiveness of the teaching English to young learners like Aisah and Hidayat (2010), Damayanti, (2010), Gunawan and Suharno (2008), Listia and Kamal (2008), and Rachmajanti (2005). All of them spotlighted the perspective of teachers and they drew the same conclusion i.e. one of the factors affected this undesirable result was accounted for the lack of professional teachers.

Harmanto, How Socio-Economic Status Contributes to Parents' Views on English Teaching for Young Learners

Faridi (2010) through his finding also claimed that a majority of teachers used the 'chalk and talk' method. These handicaps were typically related to the teachers' lack of competence in the teaching and learning processes. Today, some English teachers do not even speak English well and were not able to choose the best teaching methods and materials to use in their classrooms. This did not benefit the students' overall learning experiences and did not support the schools' mission to provide quality English education

According to Musthafa (2010), teachers of English to Young Learners should know who the children were and how the children learn a language. Such knowledge might help them give students better classroom instruction which was reflected in the way how they handle the English class with 'best teaching. Thus, conceptually speaking, a good teacher was able to help students learn and know how students learn best.

Cox (2014) added that the utilization of technology in the classroom was very important. Since technology changes rapidly, teachers have to keep up their job with it. If they wanted their students to win the competition in this world, then they have to adjust to the latest technology that the students already love to do.

Table 4 the expected prerequisites for EYL introduction

Indicators	Disagree	Agree
Need to use new technology	56 (22,9%)	189 (77,1%)
Providing a comfortable and supportive learning environment	6 (2,4%)	239 (97,6%)
Learning by playing	8 (3,3%)	237 (96,7%)
Giving equal treatment for all students	10 (4,1%)	235 (95,9%)
Not under psychological pressure	9 (3,7%)	236 (96,3%)

Table 5 which portrayed the parents' experiences to the implementation of EYL indicated that the majority of the parents agreed that English education system for young learners in Indonesia had not settled yet. They felt that human resources and training for EYL teachers were insufficiently provided. The EYL teacher seemed to be developed and trained frequently. They also agreed that the

EYL teachers did not demonstrate challenging activities for teaching YL. The time allotted for teaching and learning English was still unavailable properly.

This finding was similar to the data collected in a three-year research (RUT 2001- 2003) by Suyanto (2005) showing that only 20% of the teachers teaching English at primary schools were qualified and 80% of them did not have any English education background. Most teachers (62,8%) teaching English in the primary schools were part-timers and the rest (37,2%) were classroom teachers without any English education background. Touching on the material sources concerning each genre, 76 respondents or 31,3% use only one source book of 25 titles. Seventy nine teachers or 32,5% get the materials from two to several books, and 23,9% of them use authentic materials from various sources, such as, newspapers, magazines, brochures, food labels, manuals, and website sources. Twelve teachers (5,7%) mention that they did need course books which were in line with the new procedure.

Table 5 parents' experiences to the implementation of EYL

Indicators	Disagree	Agree
The unsettled English education system for young learners	45 (18,4%)	200 (81,6%)
The insufficient human resources and training for EYL teachers	59 (24,1%)	186 (75,9%)
The minimum challenging activities for YL	94 (38,4%)	151 (61,6%)
The limited time allotment	87 (35,5%)	158 (64,5%)

The final finding, as indicated in table 6, described the correlation between parents' SES and parents' views on equipping their children with English. The significance value (Sig value) in the above correlation box was 0.192. Since the Significance value (2-tailed) resulted is greater than 0.05, then the null hypothesis could not be rejected. It told us that there was no statistically significant correlation between two variables. That also meant that low or high in one variable did not significantly relate to poor or good in the second variable. It could therefore be concluded that statistically there was

Harmanto, How Socio-Economic Status Contributes to Parents' Views on English Teaching for Young Learners

no significant correlation between parents' SES and their views on English for their children.

Table 6 the correlation between Parents' SES and Their Views on EYL

		Parents' SES	Parents' View
Parents' SES	Pearson Correlation	1	,084
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,192
	N	245	245
Parents' View	Pearson Correlation	,084	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,192	
	N	245	245

CONCLUSION

Based on the answer to the major research question about parents' views on how to equip their children with English language in context of their SES, then the conclusions can be drawn as follows.

Firstly, regardless of the socio-economic status, parents today apparently have strong awareness and principles, good motivation, highly learning supports for their children to gain their better future by equipping them with English. Their attitudes and concerns might represent their ability to be 'good' parents as the impact of their positive views on equipping their children with English. Parents with low SES tend to support their children in terms of educating values, norms and behaviours more than providing facilities in equipping their children with English.

Secondly, if English is no longer formally started at elementary schools as an additional course, parents will determine ways to keep equipping their children with some alternatives. These own initiatives are consciously made due to their understanding of the globalization demands. The government policy on English instruction at elementary schools apparently does not have a marked impact on the parents' choices and efforts to prepare for their children's future. Parents today seem to be fairly aware of their children future needs.

Thirdly, there is a tendency that parents' SES does not make any difference in terms of their perspectives on preparing their children with English. There is no correlation between parents' SES (high or low) and their views on how to equip their children with English earlier. Regardless of their parents' socio-economic status, their view is positive about equipping their children with English at early age.

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