

# Impact of Socio-Economic and Educational Variables on English Language Acquisition among Higher Secondary Students

**Komal Singh**

Assistant Professor  
Government Acharya Sanskrit College  
Titariya, Jaipur (Rajasthan)- 303903

## **Abstract:**

English language acquisition has become one of the most important educational concerns in India because English functions not only as a language of communication but also as a medium of higher education, employment, administration, science, and technology. However, the acquisition of English as a second language is not uniform among learners. Social, economic, regional, and educational inequalities significantly influence students' opportunities for language learning. The present research paper investigates the impact of socio-economic and educational variables on English language acquisition among higher secondary students of Eastern Rajasthan with special reference to Karauli district. The paper is based on the empirical framework provided in the Komal MRP report and has been further expanded through contemporary theoretical and educational perspectives available up to 2018.

The study explores the relationship between parental education, income level, regional background, gender, medium of instruction, and language proficiency in English. The four basic language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—were analyzed using questionnaires, interviews, comprehension tests, observation methods, and classroom interaction analysis. The findings reveal that students belonging to educated and economically stable families demonstrate better communicative competence, vocabulary development, reading habits, and confidence in spoken English. Rural students and learners from Hindi-medium backgrounds face greater challenges because of limited exposure to English, lack of communicative environments, inadequate educational infrastructure, and mother tongue interference.

The paper concludes that educational equity in English language learning can only be achieved through inclusive pedagogical strategies, improved teacher training, and greater access to English learning resources for socio-economically disadvantaged learners.

## **1. Introduction**

Language plays a central role in the intellectual, social, and cultural development of human beings. It serves as a medium of communication, expression, and transmission of knowledge. In multilingual societies such as India, language learning acquires additional significance because students often learn

more than one language simultaneously. English, in particular, occupies a unique position in the Indian educational system. It functions as a second language and acts as a gateway to higher education, global communication, science, technology, administration, and employment opportunities.

In recent decades, proficiency in English has increasingly become associated with social prestige, economic mobility, and educational success. Students who possess communicative competence in English often enjoy better academic opportunities and professional prospects. However, access to English language learning remains unequal across different sections of society. Socio-economic status, parental education, geographical location, and medium of instruction significantly influence the quality and quantity of language exposure available to students.

A study conducted in Karauli district of Eastern Rajasthan highlighted the difficulties encountered by higher secondary students in learning English. The study emphasized that students from rural and economically weaker backgrounds experience substantial challenges in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Their limited exposure to English outside the classroom, combined with inadequate infrastructure and traditional grammar-oriented teaching methods, restricts their communicative development.

Second language acquisition theories also support the argument that language learning is not merely a cognitive process but a socially situated activity. Ellis (1985) argued that learner strategies and communicative opportunities shape second language acquisition. Krashen's Input Hypothesis emphasized the importance of comprehensible input in naturalistic settings, while Vygotskian perspectives highlighted the social nature of language learning.

The present paper aims to expand the original study by incorporating broader socio-economic perspectives and updated literature up to 2018. The study investigates how socio-economic and educational variables affect English language acquisition among higher secondary students in Eastern Rajasthan.

## 2. Review of Literature

Research on second language acquisition has consistently highlighted the role of social, educational, and psychological factors in language learning.

Kothainayaki (1994) examined classroom interaction patterns among school students and concluded that communicative activities and grammar drills improve linguistic competence. Karthiyayani (1995) observed that parental educational background and academic performance significantly influence reading comprehension among higher secondary students.

Nisha (1995) studied communicative competence among degree students and found that psychological conditions, parental education, and situational factors strongly influence language acquisition. Baskaran (1996) investigated orthographic errors among undergraduate students and emphasized the role of mother tongue interference in spelling mistakes.

Ravi (1998) explored motivational problems in English language learning and found that vocabulary complexity and classroom atmosphere affect learner motivation. Chandran (1999) demonstrated that English-medium students possess better communicative competence than regional-medium students.

Subramanian (2002) evaluated listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills among graduate students and recommended the use of audiovisual aids and group discussions in language classrooms. Sobana (2003) found that parental education and socio-economic background directly affect written communication skills.

Modern research after 2005 further strengthened the relationship between socio-economic status and language learning outcomes. Research on educational inequality suggested that children from economically privileged families receive greater linguistic input, access to books, internet facilities, and exposure to English media. Studies on language policy in India also emphasized that English-medium education has increasingly become associated with upward social mobility.

Research published up to 2018 demonstrated that socio-economic disparities continue to shape educational outcomes in multilingual societies. Family literacy environments, parental encouragement, access to digital resources, and school quality emerged as major predictors of English language achievement. Studies on language acquisition also highlighted the importance of communicative pedagogy, learner-centered classrooms, and technology-enabled instruction.

The literature collectively suggests that English language acquisition is deeply connected with social context, educational opportunities, and cultural capital. Therefore, any analysis of language learning must consider the socio-economic realities of learners.

### 3. Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To examine the impact of socio-economic variables on English language acquisition among higher secondary students.
2. To analyze the influence of parental education and income on language proficiency.
3. To compare the English language skills of rural and urban students
4. To study the relationship between medium of instruction and communicative competence.
5. To identify the major difficulties faced by students in listening, speaking, reading, and writing English.
6. To suggest remedial measures for improving English language learning among disadvantaged learners.

### 4. Methodology

The present study adopted a descriptive and analytical research design.

#### 4.1 Sample

The study included 300 higher secondary students selected randomly from different schools located in Hindaun, Mahaveerji, and Todabhim regions of Karauli district. Both boys and girls from rural and urban backgrounds were included.

#### 4.2 Variables

The study considered the following variables:

- Gender
- Region (Rural/Urban)
- Parental income

- Parental education
- Medium of instruction

#### **4.3 Data Collection Tools**

The following tools were used:

- Personal data sheets
- Structured questionnaires
- Speaking tests
- Reading comprehension tests
- Listening comprehension tests
- Writing tasks
- Classroom observation
- Interview schedules

#### **4.4 Procedure**

The data collection process was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, speaking and writing tests were administered. Students were instructed to answer questions and speak on selected topics. Their responses were recorded and later analyzed. In the second phase, reading and listening comprehension tests were conducted. Students answered comprehension questions after reading passages or listening to recorded dialogues.

#### **4.5 Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Student responses were categorized according to language skills and socio-economic variables. Percentage analysis and comparative interpretation were used to evaluate language performance.

### **5. Results and Discussion**

#### **5.1 Influence of Parental Education**

The findings revealed that parental education significantly influences English language acquisition. Students whose parents were educated demonstrated better vocabulary knowledge, reading habits, pronunciation, and confidence in speaking English. Educated parents were more likely to encourage reading newspapers, watching English programs, and interacting in English.

In contrast, students from illiterate or semi-literate families lacked academic guidance and linguistic exposure. Their opportunities to practice English outside the classroom were minimal.

#### **5.2 Influence of Economic Status**

Economic background emerged as another important determinant of language proficiency. Students from economically stable families had access to private tuition, books, internet facilities, smartphones, and English media. These resources enhanced their language exposure and communicative competence.

Students from economically weaker sections faced difficulties in purchasing books, accessing digital resources, and attending coaching classes. Financial constraints also affected their confidence and motivation.

### 5.3 Rural and Urban Differences

Urban students performed comparatively better in speaking and listening skills because of greater exposure to English communication and educational resources. Urban schools often possessed better infrastructure, trained teachers, and language learning materials. Rural students faced multiple disadvantages such as limited access to English-speaking environments, shortage of qualified teachers, and lack of technological support. Their interaction with English remained confined to textbooks and examinations.

### 5.4 Medium of Instruction

The study confirmed that students studying in English-medium schools performed better in communication tasks than Hindi-medium students. Continuous exposure to English in classroom interaction improved fluency and comprehension. Hindi-medium students often relied on translation-based learning methods, which restricted spontaneous communication. Mother tongue interference affected pronunciation, syntax, and vocabulary usage.

### 5.5 Gender Differences

The study found only marginal differences between male and female students. Female students generally showed better writing skills and grammatical accuracy, whereas male students demonstrated relatively greater confidence in speaking activities.

### 5.6 Classroom Environment and Motivation

The classroom environment significantly affected language learning. Students performed better in classrooms where teachers encouraged participation, interaction, and communicative activities. Motivation emerged as a key factor influencing learner confidence and language achievement.

## 6. Educational Implications

The findings of the study have important implications for English language teaching in India, especially in socio-economically disadvantaged regions.

First, language teaching should move beyond grammar-translation methods and adopt communicative approaches. Students require opportunities to use English meaningfully in classroom interaction.

Second, teacher training programs should emphasize learner-centered pedagogy, pronunciation teaching, listening activities, and technology-supported instruction.

Third, schools should create English-rich environments by encouraging debates, storytelling, role play, group discussions, and language games.

Fourth, digital resources such as educational videos, online reading materials, and language learning applications should be made accessible to rural learners.

Fifth, parental awareness programs should be organized to help parents support their children's language development.

Finally, educational policy should focus on reducing inequalities in access to quality English education. Rural schools require better infrastructure, trained teachers, and language laboratories.

## 7. Conclusion

The study concludes that socio-economic and educational variables play a crucial role in shaping English language acquisition among higher secondary students. Parental education, economic status, regional background, and medium of instruction significantly influence communicative competence, vocabulary development, and overall language proficiency.

Students from urban and economically privileged backgrounds enjoy greater exposure to English through educational resources, media, and supportive learning environments. In contrast, rural and economically weaker students face multiple barriers that hinder language acquisition.

The findings also demonstrate that language learning is not merely a cognitive process but a socially embedded activity influenced by educational opportunities, cultural exposure, and motivational factors. Therefore, improving English language proficiency among disadvantaged learners requires comprehensive educational reforms.

Communicative teaching methods, technology integration, learner-centered pedagogy, teacher training, and equitable educational policies can significantly improve language outcomes. English language education should aim not only at examination success but also at developing practical communicative competence necessary for academic achievement, employment, and social mobility.

The present study contributes to the understanding of the relationship between socio-economic conditions and second language acquisition in the Indian educational context. It also provides useful recommendations for policymakers, educators, and researchers working in the field of language education.

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