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## **A Research Review: Influence of Socio-Economic and Home Environment on Vocabulary Development of Children**

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### **Abstract**

Parents are a child's first educator. A child's family and home environment has a strong impact on his/her language, literacy development and educational achievement. This impact is stronger during the child's early years however it remains continue throughout their school years. There are various factors that influence the child's language including the vocabulary development. Many researchers carried out the research to find the association of socioeconomic status and home environment on children's vocabulary development. The present study is undertaken to review the research work carried out to find the influence of SES and home environment on vocabulary development of children especially on preschoolers. After review of existing literature it was found that many variables like family and home environment such as socioeconomic status, level of parental education, family size, parental attitudes, maternal speech, material influence, toys and behaviour etc. influence the vocabulary development of the children. Some findings also shows that quantity of talks, diversification of topics, complexities of talks and use of directive utterances are also associated with large vocabulary development of the children.

**Keywords:** Socioeconomic, Vocabulary, Home Environment, Children

### **1. Introduction**

Vocabulary is the most distinctive characteristic feature of human species which has enabled him to master the whole environment. Vocabulary development is a process by which people acquire words. The first vocabulary of the child that is cooing, babbling and then crying which gets transformed into words and sentences with maturity, age, experience, training opportunities and guidance. The children produce their first word around the age of one year. By the age of 18 months, infant can typically produce about 50 words and begin to make word combinations. During the age of 2-4 years, there is a steady increase in vocabulary of child that is about 900 words and at the age of 6 years this grows between 8000 to 14000 words (Carey, 1978) <sup>[8]</sup>.

Spieker (1982) <sup>[36]</sup> specified that language begins for the young children even before they actually begin talking. It is a three stage process. The child begins with early social exchanges that are non-verbal such as eye to eye contact and touching. In the next stage the sensory motor communication develops at the age of 2 years when object permanence develops and child can understand symbols for the things not physically present because vocabulary development is rooted in intellectual development that occur during sensory motor development period i.e. 2-7 years (Piaget, 1954) <sup>[28]</sup>.

The vocabulary of child occurs due to innate unfolding process of mental maturity (Chomsky, 1975) <sup>[9]</sup>. But it improves through intellectual process such as sensing, perceiving, recognition, conceiving, judging, reasoning and solving (Flavell, 1985) <sup>[15]</sup>. Jenkins concluded that vocabulary is dependent upon thought and thought is dependent upon vocabulary. Each is dependent upon the other and in some circumstances the two may be unrelated.

Although the ability to acquire vocabulary has a biological basis, upto some extent the vocabulary is also acquired from the environment thus the vocabulary of the child is generally determined by the society as culture in which he is born. More specifically, it is influenced by his home, school or educational system and community.

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The experimental inputs such as quality of home environment and parental stimulation are the primary facets of environment that have major impact on child's vocabulary development (Metzl, 1990) [24].

Some physiologists believe that basic human concepts emerge from the interaction of innate capabilities with environmental opportunities (Rohwar *et al.*, 1974) [30]. Therefore environment may have direct or indirect bearing on the child's vocabulary skills. Home environment provided by the parents, parental behaviour, their interaction with child and related factors lead to influence the vocabulary of child though the degree of influence may vary. In other words, it is the atmosphere, full of appreciation, love and warmth that is really congenial for the development of child. Besides, parent's interaction, parental education, parental responsiveness and attachment patterns also affect the development of children. Thus by improving the above factors of home environment the development of vocabulary may also be improved in low performing children.

Mainly the following factors influence the language development of a child:

1. General health and physical status
2. Intelligence and cognitive development
3. Learning and maturation
4. Internal environment including home environment
5. External environment including socioeconomic environment
6. Sex
7. Relationship with family members
8. Number and education level of family members
9. Bilingualism
10. Education level of parents

Though the various factors influence the vocabulary development of a child yet socioeconomic factors (SES) and home environment influence the vocabulary development upto a large extent. The present study is undertaken to review the past studies carried out to find the association of SES and home environment factors with vocabulary development of a child.

## 2. Objective of the Study

The present study is undertaken to review the existing literature regarding the influence of socio-economic and home environment on vocabulary development of preschoolers.

## 3. Data Source

The secondary data has been used for the present study. The data has been collected from various journals, books and internet sources.

## 4. Review of Existing Literature

The environment had the powerful effect on the development of child's vocabulary competence. Bakeman and Brown (1980) [2] explored that parental responsiveness to the child's needs is associated with the language, intellectual and attachment development of the child. Sandeep and Pushpa (1981) [35] found that home and school environment, parent-child interaction, social class differentiation etc. play a vital role in the vocabulary development of the children.

There were many sources of difference related to the children's vocabulary development such as the educational

status of parents and birth order. Jagannadhan (1986) [20] found that father's education and occupation had got much impact on academic performance of children.

Ashburn, Schuster, Grimm and Goff (1986) [1] stated that a child did not acquire language in vacuum, but child must be provided with a rich, responsiveness linguistic environment, stimulation of and interaction at each stage of development to acquire the communication skills.

Tennant, Mc Naughton and Glynn (1988) [38] observed that caregiver training in language skills improved the quality and quantity of language interaction with young children. A high ratio of conversation between child and caregiver resulted in increased rate of child vocabulary. The toys and material played important role in improving the vocabulary. The authors further revealed that an enriched environment consisting of toys and materials was not sufficient alone to improve language interaction that facilitates vocabulary acquisition.

Swick (1989) [37] stressed that parental support at home prior to school years had positive relationship with language and activities of child at school.

Metzl (1990) [24] stated that teaching the parents of middle socio-economic status to stimulate their infants vocabulary significantly increased the developmental scores of the infant at 6 months as well as the level of their home environment as measured by the home scale. Greenwood (1991) [16] investigated that economic status, home and school environment were the predictors of language and achievement of children.

Mishra and Mishra (1992) [25] investigated the impact of high and low SES on the acquisition of linguistic abilities and found that children from high SES status acquired better vocabulary as compared to the children from low SES groups. Norman (1992) [26] agreed that the development of vocabulary and intelligence in children was linked to positive parent-child interaction at home.

Saharan (1993) [34] studied the correlation between variables of SES and language development. It was observed that parents education bear low correlation with verbal comprehension. Parent's education was highly correlated with expressive language of their children. Material influences were predominant in the development of expressive language of the children.

Lata (1994) [23] noted that parents from high SES group tend to spend more time interacting with their children and provide them more stimulation for language development. The researcher further noticed that parents from high SES groups provide more time to interact with their children and provide them more stimulation which leads to proper development of children.

Kuntala (1996) [22] observed that more the number of siblings, more it difficult for parents to provide equal attention and opportunities to all of them in the form of material goods as well as rich stimulating environment for overall development of the children. Senechal *et al.* (1996) [40] reported that shared book reading provides a rich source of linguistic stimulation for young children. The authors examined the frequency of showed reading related to vocabulary scores for 3-6 years old children and found that the story book experiences during the pre-school years had an important influence on the development of children's vocabulary skills.

Burchinal, Campbell, Brayant, Wasik and Ramey (1997) [7] investigated the correlation between quality of center

childcare with infant cognitive and language development. The result indicated that quality of infant care is positively correlated with scores on standard assessments of cognitive, language development and communication skills.

Bornstein, Haynes and Painter (1998) <sup>[6]</sup> found that children's vocabulary competence was influenced indirectly by mothers' vocabulary, social personality, and knowledge of child development. Maternal vocabulary itself was positively influenced by SES, maternal verbal intelligence, and mothers' knowledge about parenting. Individual variation in child vocabulary competence might best be understood as arising within a nexus of contextual factors both proximal and distal to the child.

Norman (1999) <sup>[27]</sup> stated that the development of vocabulary in children is linked to positive interaction in the home. Bakeman and Brown (2000) <sup>[3]</sup> explored that the vocabulary development was associated with the development of the attachment relationship. Dunham (2000) <sup>[11]</sup> found that parents were directly responsible for establishing sound base for the proper physical, social, language and intellectual development of the children. Feldman *et al.* (2000) <sup>[14]</sup> focused that children from low SES build their vocabulary at slower rates than children from higher SES.

Cravioto, Birch, Delicardio and Rosales (2001) <sup>[10]</sup> investigated that with the increase in number of children in the family, there will be decrease in correlative intelligence quotient function and bright children generally are those who born early in the smallest family.

Baldwin (2002) <sup>[4]</sup> explored one aspect of the home environment that appears relevant to the vocabulary development and revealed that employed mothers emphasized upon more verbal interactions and which results in improvement of the vocabulary of the children.

Bloom (2002) <sup>[5]</sup> in his investigation argued that children can learn vocabulary even without helpful input from parents. Hoff *et al.* (2002) <sup>[18]</sup> found that children from high SES showed more of the characteristics of maternal speech as compared to children from low SES group. Parenting characteristics and found that proper parenting style boosted the children's understanding of the possible meanings of novel words.

Evanglou and Sylva (2003) <sup>[13]</sup> tested the vocabulary of the children from families which differs in their socio-economic status and found that children with high SES grew more than the mid-SES children in the size of their productive vocabularies which is in turn due to the differences in family functioning and home environment.

Hoff (2003) <sup>[19]</sup> has tested the hypothesis that children whose families differ in socio-economic status differ in their rates of productive vocabulary development because they have different language-learning experiences. Sixty three mothers and children were drawn from two socio-economic strata. There were 33 high-SES families in which both parents were educated upto college level and if employed worked in professional or managerial positions. There were 30 mid-SES families in which both parents were high school educated but had no education beyond high school other than technical training and, if employed, worked in unskilled, semi-skilled or service positions. The researcher found that the predictor (SES) was significantly associated with the outcome (Child vocabulary). The findings indicated that maternal speech was the mediating variable. The observed difference of growth in productive vocabulary

between a group of children from high SES families and a group of children from mid-SES families was fully explained in terms of differences in their utterances built productive vocabularies at faster rates than children who heard shorter utterances.

Rowe (2008) <sup>[33]</sup> studied the phenomenon that why parents from different SES groups communicate in different ways with their children. The researcher found that parental knowledge of child development mediates the relationship between SES and child-directed speech, suggesting that parents from different SES groups have different beliefs about child development which influence how they communicate with their children on a day-to-day basis. The findings show that more talk, more diverse and complex talk and limited use of directive utterances by parents is associated with larger vocabulary size in children. The study also reaffirms that both parent's education and family income relates to the communication that parents offer to children on a day-to-day basis. Specifically, more educated and advantaged parents talk more to their children, use more diverse vocabulary and longer utterances, and produce a smaller proportion of utterances that direct their child's behaviour than less educated and advantaged parents.

Hartas (2011) <sup>[17]</sup> examined the relationship between home learning and parent's socio-economic status and their impact on young children's language/literacy and socio-emotional competence. The findings showed that, irrespective of socio-economic status, parents engaged with various learning activities (except reading) roughly equals. The socio-economic factors examined in this study, i.e., family income and maternal educational qualifications, were found to have a stronger effect on children's language/literacy than on social-emotional competence. Socio-economic disadvantage, lack of maternal educational qualifications in particular, remained powerful in influencing competencies in children aged three and at the start of primary school.

Rowe (2012) <sup>[32]</sup> in his study looked at factors that contribute most to a child's later vocabulary development. The researcher found that children's vocabulary at 30 months was influenced by the quantity of words a parent used one year earlier. Children's vocabulary at 42 months was influenced by parent's use of a variety of sophisticated words one year earlier and children's vocabulary at 54 months was influenced by parent's use of narratives and explanations one year earlier. The researcher concluded that the quantity of words is not the whole story and that these other influences also have an impact on children's vocabulary.

Ebert *et al.* (2012) <sup>[12]</sup> found that phonological working memory and to a lesser extent home learning environment are predictive for children's vocabulary scores when various internal and external variables are considered. On the other hand, preschool characteristics have not been found to significantly contribute to vocabulary development at least when internal child characteristics are controlled for. However, this does not mean that preschool process quality as measured by the ECERS is not relevant for children's cognitive development. Hence, phonological working memory has a strong impact on all children's initial vocabulary but also vocabulary growth in those parents who speak German as an additional language. The effects of preschool and home learning environment are comparatively smaller.

Van Vechten (2013) <sup>[39]</sup> studied the impact of environmental factors on students from low socioeconomic backgrounds by asking the question: How does a low socioeconomic student's home literacy environment affect his or her literacy experiences and interests in reading? Results of the study revealed that students from low socioeconomic status (SES) homes are behind in their reading levels and are limited in their literacy interests and class participation. With explicit instruction and intensive intervention, schools and parents can work together to improve the quality of low SES children's Home Literacy Environments (HLE).

Ronfani *et al.* (2015) <sup>[31]</sup> studied the relative role of SES, home environment and maternal intelligence as factors affecting child cognitive development in early childhood. The results show a relationship between SES and maternal IQ with a complete mediation effect of home environment in affecting cognitive and language domains. A direct significant effect of maternal IQ on the BSID III motor development scale and the mediation effect of home environment were found. The results show that home environment was the variable with greater influence on neurodevelopment at 18 months. The observation of how parents and children interact in the home context is crucial to adequately evaluate the early child development.

#### 4. Conclusion

Hence, it is clear from the above studies that socioeconomic and home environment plays a crucial role in vocabulary development of the children. Some of the factors which affect the vocabulary development of children include the home and school environment, parent-child interaction, social class differentiation, economic status, material influence, toys, parent's education level, maternal speech, mother's vocabulary, social personality and knowledge of child development. Some findings also shows that quantity, diversification and complexities of talks with child, use of directive utterances by parents are also associated with larger vocabulary size of children.

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