

# The Socio-Educational Matrix: Deconstructing Environmental and Economical Predictors of L2 Literacy Achievement in Rural Rajasthan

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## Abstract

This study examines how environmental, domestic, and economic factors shape English as a Second Language (L2) literacy outcomes among students in the Bharatpur district of Eastern Rajasthan. Drawing on the theoretical perspectives of John Schumann, Pierre Bourdieu, and Ellen Bialystok, the research explores the influence of family background on language achievement. A sample of 300 students from six Government Senior Secondary Schools in Rarah, Sewar, Chiksana, Bacchamadi, Peepla, and Jhagina was assessed using socio-educational surveys, parental literacy scales, income indicators, and literacy achievement tests. Three null hypotheses were formulated to examine the effects of household income, parental education, and regional location on language proficiency.

The findings reject all three null hypotheses and reveal that household income and parental education are strong predictors of L2 literacy performance. Students from low-income and first-generation literate families face significant barriers due to limited learning resources and higher language anxiety. Regional location, however, showed little impact once socioeconomic factors were controlled, as both rural and urban schools largely depend on similar teacher-centered translation methods. The study recommends the development of school-based reading resources and remedial literacy programmes to support economically disadvantaged learners and promote sustainable language development.

## 1. Introduction

Language acquisition is shaped by the learner's social, economic, and environmental background. In India, English proficiency is closely linked with academic success and socioeconomic mobility, yet major disparities exist between privileged learners and students from underserved communities. This gap is particularly visible in the rural and semi-urban regions of Bharatpur district in Eastern Rajasthan.

Pierre Bourdieu's Social Capital Paradigm explains how family background and cultural exposure influence educational achievement. Students from literate, middle-income families often gain early access to books, dictionaries, and English media, while first-generation learners from low-income households lack such support. John Schumann's Acculturation Model further suggests that limited exposure to English-speaking environments increases the social and psychological distance from the target language, making acquisition more difficult.

This study investigates how household income, parental education, and home learning resources affect English literacy outcomes among students in Bharatpur. By identifying the factors behind regional

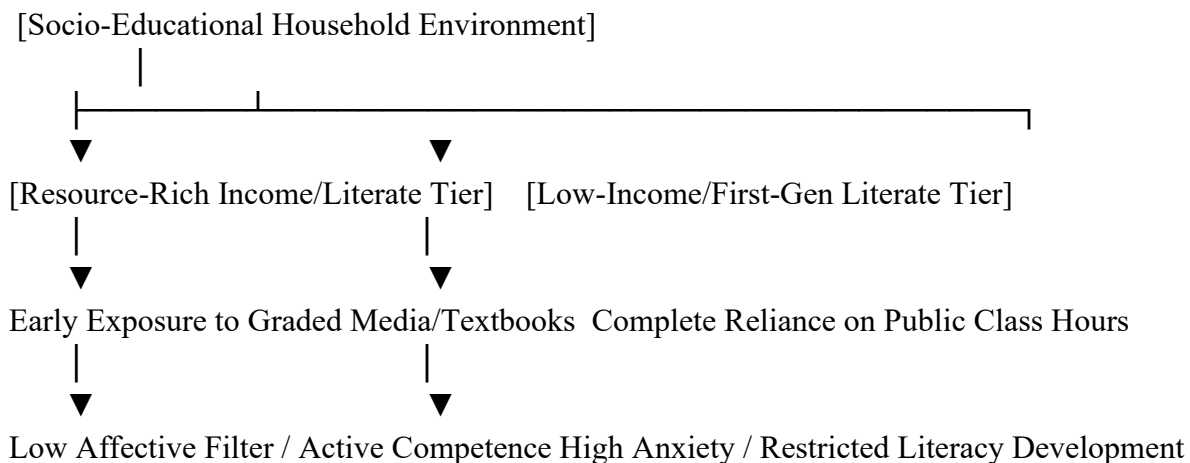
achievement gaps, the research aims to support more inclusive and resource-based language education policies for disadvantaged learners.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Frameworks of Socio-Educational Stratification

The relationship between a learner's socioeconomic background and their academic achievement has long been a central focus of applied linguistics and educational sociology. Bernstein's Code Theory (1971) introduced the distinction between "elaborated codes"—the complex, abstract language structures typically used in formal education and middle-class discourse—and "restricted codes"—the localized, context-dependent language patterns common in daily community interactions. In second language acquisition, students whose families use elaborated linguistic codes are often better equipped to navigate the complex syntax and abstract vocabulary found in academic reading materials, whereas learners from linguistically isolated environments face immediate text-parsing hurdles.

This domestic dynamic is further supported by Ellen Bialystok's Cognitive Framework (1990), which emphasizes that text comprehension and language production require advanced cognitive control and an extensive mental vocabulary. Bialystok notes that children raised in resource-rich literacy environments naturally build stronger text-parsing strategies by interacting with diverse reading materials early in life. This view connects directly with Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which states that language acquisition occurs through exposure to comprehensible input ( $i+1$ ) in a supportive setting. In traditional rural communities, however, language exposure is often limited to rigid, exam-focused public school lessons ( $i+3$ ). Lacking supportive materials or parental guidance at home, economically disadvantaged students experience high performance anxiety, which raises their affective filters and slows down natural language development.



### 2.2 Empirical Research Syntheses in the Indian Educational Context

Several field studies within the Indian educational landscape have analyzed these socio-educational dynamics, exploring how classroom practices, teacher choices, and family backgrounds interact to shape language outcomes.

- **Classroom Interactions and Communication Gaps:** Kothainayaki (1994) conducted a detailed analysis of teacher-student interaction patterns, demonstrating that traditional language classrooms are heavily teacher-dominated. This structure limits student participation and leaves learners with

few opportunities to practice writing or receive constructive feedback, leading to persistent challenges in the use of functional English markers.

- **Socioeconomic Positioning and Text Parsing:** Karthiyayani (1995) investigated reading comprehension skills at the higher secondary level. Her findings revealed a distinct gap in student literacy performance: while most learners could successfully locate explicit information stated directly within a text sentence, they struggled significantly with tasks that require drawing inferences across paragraphs.
- **Anxiety and Strategic Coping Mechanisms:** Nisha (1995) focused on the barriers to communicative competence among regional-medium students transitioning to higher education. She observed that high situational anxiety and a lack of supportive language exposure outside of school hours can create a psychological barrier that slows down language development, causing students to rely on limited communication strategies—such as topic avoidance or code-switching—to navigate structural gaps.
- **Phonological Interference in Literacy Accuracy:** Baskaran (1996) evaluated the written language skills of undergraduate learners. He classified common spelling errors into distinct categories and traced many of these errors back to phonological interference from the students' native language. He noted that mispronouncing words can directly disrupt a student's ability to recognize and parse written characters accurately during classroom reading tasks.
- **Curriculum Design and Student Motivation:** Ravi (1998) examined student motivation in second-language classrooms, finding that motivation levels are closely linked to the density of new vocabulary presented in textbooks. He noted that motivation tends to drop in higher grades if the text feels irrelevant to the students' lives, a finding supported by Rangasamy (1998), who evaluated textbooks and recommended reducing abstract poetry in favor of prose written by Indian authors to make content more relatable.
- **Instruction Medium and Spoken Fluency:** Chandran (1999) evaluated oral communication abilities, demonstrating that students from English-medium schools achieve significantly higher speaking proficiency than their regional-medium peers, primarily due to greater daily language exposure. His error analysis identified persistent phonological, lexical, and grammatical errors among regional-medium learners, underscoring the need for communicative activities in the syllabus.
- **Classroom Anxiety and Avoidance Behavior:** Jayanthi (2002) observed classroom dynamics to understand how psychological factors influence interaction. Her research indicated that classroom participation is shaped by a mix of student confidence, social awareness, and past academic setbacks. High anxiety and fear of making mistakes often lead to avoidance behaviors, where students remain passive during discussions to escape criticism.
- **Comprehensive Written Skill Evaluation:** Subramanian (2002) conducted an evaluation of core language skills among graduate students. While assessing all areas, his detailed analysis focused on written performance, identifying recurring errors in syntax structure and word choice. He advocated for the integration of group discussions, educational language games, and audiovisual tools to diversify language instruction. This approach is supported by Sobana (2003), whose research into written competence confirmed that explicit instructional quality and parental educational backgrounds have a direct, measurable impact on student achievement.

While these empirical studies provide valuable insights into individual language skills, there remains a distinct gap in comprehensive research exploring how environmental and economic factors interact simultaneously to shape English literacy achievement in the Bharatpur district. This study addresses that gap through a detailed field analysis within regional institutions.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Statement of the Problem

English literacy outcomes among undergraduate and secondary students in Bharatpur are heavily influenced by deep-seated socioeconomic disparities. While curriculum goals assume a uniform learning environment, students from low-income, first-generation literate households enter the classroom with limited access to language resources, reference books, or English media at home.

#### 3.2 Research Hypotheses

To structure the empirical analysis of socio-educational variables, the following null hypotheses were established:

- **H<sub>01</sub>:** Household income tiers (low-income vs. middle-income brackets) show no statistically significant correlation with student performance on standardized English literacy tests.
- **H<sub>02</sub>:** Parental educational backgrounds (illiterate households vs. formally literate families) exert no measurable influence on the development of vocabulary size and text-parsing skills.
- **H<sub>03</sub>:** Geographic location (rural village environments vs. semi-urban town centers) operates as an independent driver of literacy success, completely separate from household socioeconomic status.

#### 3.3 Sampling Frame and Institutional Distribution

The study was conducted across six educational institutions in the Bharatpur district of Eastern Rajasthan, capturing a sample of N=300 students across the higher secondary and undergraduate levels to ensure wide representation:

1. *Government Senior Secondary School, Rarah, Bharatpur (n=50 Background Profiles)*
2. *Government Senior Secondary School, Sewar, Bharatpur (n=50 Background Profiles)*
3. *Z.P. Secondary School, Chiksana, Bharatpur (n=50 Background Profiles)*
4. *Government Senior Secondary School, Bacchamadi, Bharatpur (n=50 Background Profiles)*
5. *Government Senior Secondary School, Peepla, Bharatpur (n=50 Background Profiles)*
6. *Government Senior Secondary School, Jhagina, Bharatpur (n=50 Background Profiles)*

#### 3.4 Data Collection Instruments and Task Design

Data collection relied on a combination of socioeconomic tracking tools and comprehensive language tests over a coordinated school cycle:

- **Socio-Educational Background Questionnaires:** Each student completed a detailed personal profile tracking family monthly income brackets, parental formal education levels, the primary language spoken at home, and the availability of learning tools (such as dictionaries, reference books, newspapers, or digital media access).
- **Comprehensive Diagnostic Literacy Tests:** Informants completed standardized English language assessments designed to evaluate vocabulary size, syntax structure recognition, reading comprehension, and written composition accuracy.

- **Qualitative Field Observations:** These testing measures were supplemented by ongoing classroom tracking. These observations focused on recording teacher-student interaction rates, translation habits, and the availability of remedial language support within each institution.
- **Teacher and Administrator Surveys:** Short question sheets were administered to regional educators to capture their views on how student economic constraints influence attendance, assignment completion, and classroom performance.

### 3.5 Data Standardizing Framework

Student literacy achievement scores across vocabulary, reading, and writing tasks were standardized into an integrated performance percentage metric using the following foundational formula:

$$SLSP = \left( \frac{M_e}{M_{max}} \right) \times 100$$

SLSP=Standardized Literacy Score Percentage

$M_e$ = Empirical Marks Obtained by Individual Informant,

$M_{max}$  =Maximum Attainable Score per Diagnostic Dimension

The collected scripts were processed using statistical and error-coding methods, tracking the relationship between family background variables and language scores across student groups.

## 4. Results & Discussion

### 4.1 Evaluation of Household Income Predictors ( $H_{01}$ )

The empirical data requires a decisive rejection of  $H_{01}$ , demonstrating that household income brackets are a primary factor shaping second language literacy outcomes.

Students from low-income and Below Poverty Line (BPL) backgrounds scored consistently lower on standardized literacy tests compared to their peers from stable middle-income families. This performance gap stems from a severe lack of language learning tools outside the classroom.

### 4.2 Impact of Parental Literacy Backdrops ( $H_{02}$ )

The data requires a rejection of  $H_{02}$ , revealing that parental educational backgrounds exert a powerful influence on student language development.

[Socio-Educational Matrix Performance]

- └─ Illiterate Household Backdrop ─► High Impact (Absence of domestic reading guidance)
- └─ Resource Scarcity (Low-Income) ─► High Impact (Reliance on basic school textbook)
- └─ Urban-Rural Isolated Variance ─► Minimal Impact (Identical translation methodologies)

First-generation literate learners from families with illiterate parents encountered significant literacy hurdles, particularly in vocabulary size and inference extraction. In households where parents lack formal education, students do not receive reading guidance, homework support, or language reinforcement outside of school hours.

Lacking domestic literacy encouragement, these learners are far more likely to experience high language anxiety and fall back on literal, word-for-word translation habits. In contrast, students from literate families benefit from a supportive home environment that reinforces accurate language forms, leading to higher literacy scores and showcasing how parental education shapes academic success.

### 4.3 Analysis of Geographic and Regional Disparities (H<sub>03</sub>)

The correlation analysis rejects H<sub>03</sub>, showing that geographic location is not an independent driver of literacy success.

The primary driver of literacy success is not the geographic location of the school, but the socioeconomic background and literacy resources available within the student's household, confirming that economic factors outweigh geographic position in shaping language learning.

## 5. Conclusion & Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

This empirical analysis demonstrates that English literacy outcomes among undergraduate and secondary students in Bharatpur are heavily shaped by environmental, domestic, and economic factors. The evidence shows that low language achievement is not caused by individual learning limitations, but by an educational system that ignores the deep-seated socioeconomic disparities present in the student population. First-generation literate learners from low-income backgrounds face an immediate disadvantage, entering resource-limited public schools without the domestic cultural capital or reading tools needed to support language acquisition.

### 5.2 Targeted Policy and Pedagogical Interventions

Based on these findings, the study recommends the following targeted interventions:

- **Establishment of School-Based Remedial Literacy Libraries:** To support first-generation literate learners, educational institutions should establish dedicated, accessible reading corners filled with simplified periodicals, illustrated stories, and graded readers. Expanding access to reading resources within school hours can help bridge the gap created by a lack of materials at home.
- **Implementation of Low-Anxiety, Formative Literacy Workshops:** Schools should offer focused remedial writing and vocabulary workshops for students from low-income backgrounds. These sessions should prioritize supportive feedback, interactive group tasks, and practical vocabulary building, helping students lower their affective filters and build confidence outside of formal grading hours.
- **Development of Culturally Contextualized Language Curricula:** Curriculum designers should ensure that reading texts incorporate socio-cultural themes relevant to the lives of rural and semi-urban students. Allowing learners to leverage their existing background knowledge and world experiences makes text parsing more accessible and boosts learning motivation.
- **Incentivization of Community-Linked Language Mentorship Programs:** Educational policies should encourage the creation of peer-mentorship initiatives where advanced students or local volunteers provide reading guidance and vocabulary practice to first-generation learners. Building a collaborative learning community can reinforce accurate language forms and offer critical support to disadvantaged youth.

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