

Home Literacy Environments in Indonesia: Examining the Role of Socioeconomic Status in Family Language Practices

Veniati¹, Titin Indriati², Hayati Nupus³, Godlove Kiswaga⁴, Abdramane Dicko⁵, Muhammad Irwansyah⁶

^{1,6}Department of Mechanical Engineering, Bangka Belitung State Manufacturing Polytechnic, Indonesia

²Department of Electrical Engineering and Agricultural Industry, Bangka Belitung State Manufacturing Polytechnic, Indonesia

³Faculty of Economics and Business, Pamulang University, Indonesia

⁴Department of Languages and Literature, The Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy (MNMA), Tanzania

⁵Department of German Studies, Université Des Lettres Et Des Sciences De Bamako (ULSHB), Mali

¹veniati@polman-babel.ac.id, ²titinindriati@polman-babel.ac.id, ³dosen03463@unpam.ac.id,

⁴Godlove.kiswaga@mnma.ac.tz, ⁵ardodicko1@gmail.com,

⁶muhammadirwansyahpkp@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Literacy is understood as more than the ability to read and write, as it also involves cognitive skills shaped by social and cultural experiences and is closely linked to language acquisition. This study aims to examine how Indonesian families support literacy development at home and how socioeconomic factors influence these practices. Using Spolsky's (2004) Family Language Policy (FLP) framework, the study applies a qualitative approach with data collected through questionnaires and interviews. The findings show that, although families generally demonstrate positive attitudes toward language use and engage in supportive literacy practices, their efforts in systematic literacy planning remain limited. In terms of socioeconomic influence, only mothers' educational background is found to have a significant impact, particularly in shaping language-related practices and literacy support at home. Other factors, such as fathers' education, occupation, and household income, show no strong influence on family language policy or foreign language literacy planning.



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A. INTRODUCTION

Beginning prior to birth, children develop within socially stratified contexts that shape their access to cognitive and linguistic resources. Socioeconomic status (SES) has been widely recognized as a key determinant of language development, as variations in home literacy activities and the quality of linguistic input significantly influence children's vocabulary growth and language processing (Fernald & Marchman, 2012; Rowe, 2012). Children from higher SES backgrounds tend to experience richer language exposure and more frequent interactions,

while disparities in parental education, access to learning materials, and environmental stress contribute to unequal developmental outcomes (Noble et al., 2015; Rakesh et al., 2024). In the Indonesian context, data from Badan Pusat Statistik show that literacy development varies across regions, as reflected in the 2024 Literacy Development Index, indicating disparities in literacy conditions among provinces. These findings highlight that literacy inequality remains a significant issue and is closely linked to socioeconomic conditions.

A growing body of research emphasizes the role of family context in shaping children's literacy experiences, particularly through family language policy and the home literacy environment. Studies in multilingual settings show that family structure, parental beliefs, and socioeconomic resources interact to influence literacy development (Karpava, 2021; Said, 2021; Yin et al., 2024). However, existing research largely focuses on structural and environmental factors, while literacy planning as a systematic family practice and the role of parental language goals remain underexplored.

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates literacy planning practices within Indonesian families and examines how these practices are shaped by SES using the Family Language Policy framework (Spolsky, 2004). By focusing on how literacy planning is conceptualized and enacted at the family level, this study offers a contextualized contribution to understanding literacy development in Indonesia and provides insights for designing more targeted literacy interventions.

Family Language Policy (FLP) is understood as a framework consisting of language ideology, language practices, and language management, as proposed by Spolsky. Within the family context, parental beliefs influence everyday language use and deliberate strategies that shape children's language and literacy development (King & Lanza, 2017; De Houwer, 2020). These dimensions interact dynamically and are embedded in broader social and educational contexts, positioning the family as both a recipient and an agent of language policy. In this framework, literacy planning is considered a key component, referring to how families organize and sustain literacy-related activities through the interaction of beliefs, practices, and intentional management of literacy resources (Pickles et al., 2023). As a dynamic process, FLP evolves over time and is influenced by external factors such as schooling and peer interaction, which may also reshape parental beliefs and practices (Yin et al., 2024).

Literacy and language acquisition develop simultaneously and reinforce one another. From a usage-based perspective, language learning emerges through repeated exposure and meaningful interaction (Ellis, 2019). Research indicates that structured literacy activities, such as shared reading and consistent language exposure at home, support vocabulary growth and overall language competence (Madigan et al., 2019; Romeo et al., 2018). Child language acquisition is shaped by both cognitive factors and environmental input, particularly within family interactions (Hoff, 2018; Kidd et al., 2018). Moreover, the quality of parental input has been shown to have a stronger influence on children's language outcomes than quantity alone, highlighting the importance of meaningful engagement and interaction (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015). Active parental involvement, including storytelling and shared reading, therefore plays a crucial role in supporting children's language and literacy development (Yin et al., 2024).

Socioeconomic status (SES), commonly measured by parental education, income, and occupation, shapes the conditions under which families support children's literacy development. Higher parental education is associated with stronger literacy-related beliefs and more intentional planning of literacy activities, while income and occupational demands influence access to learning materials and time for interaction (Madigan et al., 2019; Pace et al., 2017). The influence of SES operates largely through indirect mechanisms, such as differences in parental engagement, cognitive stimulation, and access to educational resources (Britto et al., 2017). Consequently, socioeconomic differences are reflected in variation in the quality and consistency of literacy planning practices, which in turn contribute to disparities in children's language and literacy development across SES groups. Families with greater resources tend to

provide richer and more consistent linguistic input, whereas economic constraints may limit opportunities for interaction and literacy engagement. These differences contribute to variation in children's language outcomes, underscoring that disparities in language development are shaped by environmental conditions rather than inherent ability (Rakesh et al., 2025; Romeo et al., 2022).

Previous studies have highlighted the complex and multidimensional nature of family language policy (FLP) and literacy planning. Karpava (2021) shows that family type and socioeconomic and biographical factors shape the home literacy environment and literacy development. Similarly, Said (2021) and Yin et al. (2021) emphasize the significant role of parental ideology and socioeconomic factors, particularly mothers' educational background, in influencing literacy practices and planning, while also noting limited awareness of language management in families. More recent studies further demonstrate that FLP has long-term and intergenerational effects, shaping not only children's language development but also future language ideologies and parenting intentions. (Pagé & Noels, 2024); Tang & Calafato, 2025).

However, despite these insights, limited research has specifically examined how socioeconomic factors influence literacy planning within the FLP framework in the Indonesian context. In particular, the interaction between parental beliefs, practices, and management strategies in shaping foreign language literacy planning remains underexplored. Therefore, this study offers a novel contribution by investigating literacy planning in Indonesian families through an integrated FLP perspective, with a specific focus on the role of socioeconomic factors, especially maternal education, in shaping family literacy practices.

B. METHODS

This study investigates literacy planning practices in Indonesian families and explores how these practices are shaped by socioeconomic status (SES). Employing a qualitative design, the study involved 30 families with children in Grades 1 to 3 of elementary school in Bangka, Bangka Belitung. This age group was selected because children at this stage are still primarily influenced by family environments, allowing for a clearer examination of family language policy (Shen et al., 2021). Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure variation in socioeconomic backgrounds, including differences in parental education, occupation, and household income, thereby enabling representation of diverse SES conditions.

Data collection was conducted in two stages using methodological triangulation. First, questionnaires were administered to 30 students to gather demographic, socioeconomic, and language-related information, including language use, competence, and language ideology. The questionnaire was originally developed in English and translated into Indonesian to ensure clarity. Second, follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents from four purposively selected families representing different SES levels. These interviews explored literacy planning practices based on the three dimensions of Family Language Policy (FLP): language ideology, language practices, and language management. The questionnaire survey was used to systematically collect participants' background characteristics and literacy-related information, in line with contemporary methodological views that conceptualize questionnaires as structured instruments for gathering standardized data on participants' attributes, experiences, and practices (Dörnyei, Z., & Taguchi, 2018). Recent research emphasizes that the effectiveness and appropriateness of questionnaire-based data collection depend on its alignment with the research questions, the constructs under investigation, and the characteristics of the target population (Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, 2018; Taherdoost, 2021). Semi-structured interviews were employed to complement the survey data by allowing participants to elaborate on their responses and provide richer, contextualized accounts of their literacy-related beliefs and practices, thereby strengthening the depth and robustness of the findings through methodological triangulation.

In this study, questionnaires were administered to 30 participants drawn from families with elementary school-aged children. The instrument was initially developed in English and subsequently translated into Indonesian to enhance clarity and accessibility. The questionnaire comprised five sections, with the first section focusing on participants' demographic and socioeconomic background. The questionnaire data were used to inform and contextualize the qualitative interview findings, thereby strengthening the depth and credibility of the overall analysis. The second section of the questionnaire focused on the participants' language competence. The third section examined the frequency of language use in participants' daily lives. The fourth section explored the languages most commonly used by participants across different contexts, including the home, neighborhood, school, and public settings. The final section addressed participants' indigenous language ideology. The questionnaires were administered and collected in person by the researcher to ensure accurate data collection.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were employed as a follow-up method to complement the questionnaire data and to gain deeper insight into participants' responses. Contemporary research methodology highlights that interviews are particularly valuable for elaborating, clarifying, and contextualizing findings derived from survey data, especially when researchers seek to explore participants' beliefs, experiences, and practices in greater depth (Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, 2018; Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, 2018). From the total sample of 30 elementary school students, four students were purposively selected, and interviews were conducted with their parents to obtain follow-up data on family literacy practices. The interview questions focused on literacy planning and were designed in alignment with the three core dimensions of family language policy (FLP), namely language ideology, language practices, and language management. In addition, the interviews explored participants' socioeconomic backgrounds in a holistic manner, allowing the researcher to capture broader contextual factors that may influence family literacy planning.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving coding, pattern identification, and interpretation (Braun, V., & Clarke, 2021). Thematic analysis involves identifying, organizing, and interpreting recurring patterns of meaning across the dataset, enabling a detailed examination of participants' perspectives and experiences. This analytic approach is particularly suitable for studies that aim to understand complex social phenomena, such as family language and literacy practices, within their contextual settings (Nowell et al., 2017). Furthermore, thematic analysis facilitates comparison across cases and supports the integration of data from multiple sources, such as questionnaires and interviews, thereby strengthening the credibility and coherence of the findings through methodological triangulation.

The analysis was conducted through three interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved the careful selection, simplification, and transformation of raw data to ensure alignment with the research questions. Data display consisted of organizing the reduced data into structured and condensed formats that facilitated pattern recognition and analytical reflection. The final stage, conclusion drawing, entailed synthesizing the identified themes and constructing coherent interpretations grounded in the displayed data.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed. Credibility was strengthened through methodological triangulation by integrating data from questionnaires and interviews, allowing findings to be cross-validated across different data sources. Dependability was ensured by maintaining a clear and systematic analytic procedure, including transparent documentation of coding decisions and theme development. Furthermore, triangulation across data sources and time points supported consistent interpretation and minimized researcher bias, thereby reinforcing the rigor and reliability of the qualitative findings.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study and provides a discussion of the results. The section is organized into two main parts. The first part examines the influence of socioeconomic status on family language policy. The second part explores the effects of socioeconomic status on families' foreign language literacy planning.

1. Socioeconomic Influences on Family Language Policy

Effect 1: Family language Use

Based on the data, the findings indicate that socioeconomic status plays a role in shaping language use within the family. Families with higher socioeconomic status tend to adopt bilingual language practices in their home environment. As one participant stated:

"In our daily lives, we generally use two languages, Bangka Malay and Indonesian. As a result, our children become accustomed to speaking Indonesian at home." (S/35)

Parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds recognize the importance of using Indonesian as a means of communication with the wider community, while simultaneously emphasizing the need for their children to maintain the local language. In contrast, parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tend to adopt monolingual practices, using only Bangka Malay within their daily interactions and when communicating with other families in the community. These findings are consistent with Schwab & Lew-Williams (2016) assertion that socioeconomic status significantly influences children's language development, including vocabulary growth, grammatical development, and language processing abilities.

Thus, the findings indicate significant differences in family language policy across socioeconomic groups. Parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to adopt bilingual language practices within their family environment. They usually used Bangka language and Indonesian to communicate with each other. Parents also have good ability to teach their children speak Indonesian. So, the children also can speak Indonesian fluently. While, parents with low socioeconomic status used monolingual. They relied exclusively on the local language (Bangka Malay) for communication, primarily due to limited proficiency in other languages. Additionally, the local language functions as both their mother tongue and the primary medium of everyday interaction.

Adopting bilingual communication within the family is beneficial for children's language development, as it supports the acquisition of a broader vocabulary, grammatical competence, and language processing skills. Furthermore, children who are exposed to bilingual practices at home tend to demonstrate stronger proficiency in Indonesian when they enter school, which facilitates effective communication with teachers and peers from diverse backgrounds. At the same time, continued use of the local language allows children to maintain and express their cultural and linguistic identity.

Effect 2: Divergent Parental Language Ideologies

Socioeconomic status also influences parents' language ideology, particularly their perceptions of the value of language learning. Parents expressed an interest in introducing their children to several foreign languages, such as English, Hebrew, and Arabic. Those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to view language proficiency as an essential skill for their children, emphasizing the importance of communicative competence. For instance, one parent highlighted the significance of English due to its global status, stating:

“I want to teach my child English because I believe English is an international language that is highly necessary.” (S/35)

In addition, these parents associate foreign language learning with future career prospects, particularly in professional and international contexts. This perspective is reflected in the following statement:

“To prepare children for future work environments or participation in the international arena.” (MRF/30)

Overall, parents with higher socioeconomic status demonstrate greater concern for language education, as they perceive language proficiency as a key factor in enhancing their children’s future career opportunities. In contrast, parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds also acknowledge the importance of learning foreign languages, but their motivations tend to be more limited in scope. As one parent explained:

“So that my child can speak English fluently.” (H/30)

This finding suggests that parents with lower socioeconomic status hold a more instrumental and simplified view of foreign language learning, focusing primarily on basic communicative ability. This perspective differs markedly from that of parents with higher socioeconomic status, who emphasize broader functional, educational, and career-related benefits. Furthermore, these findings are consistent with Said's (2021) argument that parents from different socioeconomic backgrounds exhibit varying motivations in establishing literacy environments within the home. Parents have different motivation on teach foreign language for their children. From the data above, the researcher also found that parents with different socioeconomic status also have different views about learning foreign language. It can be conclude that parents with higher socioeconomic status more critical thinking than low socioeconomic status.

Effect 3: Approaches to Language Learning

With regard to language learning patterns, parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to favor the use of technology in supporting foreign language learning. As one parent noted:

“I prefer using YouTube and storybooks.” (MRF/30)

This statement suggests that parents with higher socioeconomic status are more inclined to utilize digital platforms, such as YouTube, as resources for foreign language learning. In contrast, parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tend to rely on more conventional approaches, such as enrolling their children in private lessons to support the development of foreign language proficiency.

2. Socioeconomic Influences on Foreign Language Literacy Planning within Families

Effect 1: Foreign Language Learning Approaches within the Family Context

The first observed effect concerns the ways in which children learn foreign languages, a crucial aspect given the central role of parents in selecting appropriate learning approaches. Effective guidance from parents enables children to develop foreign language proficiency and achieve greater fluency. Parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to rely on digital

media and applications when supporting their children's foreign language learning, making extensive use of technology in the learning process. As one participant explained:

"I want to teach my child a foreign language by watching YouTube channels related to learning English. We can also use other media, such as songs and video games." (MRF/30)

In contrast, parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds generally prefer more formal and conventional learning approaches, such as enrolling their children in private foreign language lessons. This preference is reflected in the following statement:

"I prefer to enroll my child in foreign language tutoring if the child wants to." (I/27)

These findings indicate that parents with lower socioeconomic status tend to adopt structured and traditional methods of foreign language learning, which may benefit children by providing organized and systematic instruction. However, the effectiveness of such approaches depends largely on the teacher's ability to employ engaging and appropriate teaching methods. Meanwhile, parents with higher socioeconomic status are more inclined to utilize technology-based and modern learning strategies, including YouTube, songs, and video games. These approaches may enhance children's motivation and engagement, while also fostering more responsible and informed use of technology.

Overall, the findings align with Said's (2021) argument that socioeconomic status influences parental motivation, which in turn shapes the methods used to support children's foreign language learning. Given that children have diverse learning styles, the choice of learning methods should be adapted to individual needs. Therefore, effective communication between parents and children is essential in selecting the most suitable strategies for mastering a foreign language.

Effect 2: Home-Based Activities of Children

Based on the data, the findings indicate that socioeconomic status influences children's home-based activities. Children whose parents belong to higher socioeconomic groups tend to engage more frequently with YouTube and storybooks in foreign languages while at home. As one participant noted:

"My child watches YouTube more often at home." (MRF/30)

These activities are closely related to the approaches used in foreign language learning, as parents with higher socioeconomic status tend to favor technology-based methods when supporting their children's language development. Digital platforms, such as YouTube, are commonly utilized as learning resources.

In contrast, children from families with lower socioeconomic status are more likely to watch television as part of their exposure to foreign languages at home. This pattern is reflected in the following statement:

"My child watches television more often at home." (I/27)

Overall, the findings suggest that differences in socioeconomic status are associated with variations in children's activities within the home environment. Parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to prefer digital media such as YouTube, whereas those from

lower socioeconomic backgrounds rely more on television. These results are consistent with Hoff & Ribot's (2015) argument that socioeconomic differences play a significant role in shaping children's language acquisition.

Effect 3: Home Learning Facilities Provided by Parents

Socioeconomic status also appears to influence the types of learning facilities parents provide at home. Parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to offer a wider range of educational resources. As one participant explained:

"We provide educational programs, including English learning materials and vocabulary-related posters." (S/35)

In addition, these parents often support their children's learning through the use of technology, such as digital devices and internet access. One parent noted:

"Yes, we provide gadgets and Wi-Fi to access various foreign-language content and to communicate with others through social media, online games, and similar platforms." (MRF/30)

In contrast, parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds generally limit the learning facilities they provide to formal options, such as enrolling their children in private lessons. This difference highlights a clear disparity in the types of support available to children across socioeconomic groups.

Overall, the findings suggest that socioeconomic status significantly shapes both family language policy and family foreign language literacy planning. In terms of family language policy, socioeconomic status influences language use within the home, parental language ideologies, and patterns of language learning. With regard to family foreign language literacy planning, socioeconomic status affects the approaches to foreign language learning, children's home-based activities, and the learning facilities provided by parents.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study investigates literacy planning in Indonesian families and examines the influence of socioeconomic status on these practices. Accordingly, the study addresses two main areas of focus. First, it explores the effects of socioeconomic status on family language policy. Second, it examines how socioeconomic status shapes families' foreign language literacy planning. The findings reveal several ways in which socioeconomic status influences family practices. In relation to family language policy, socioeconomic status affects language use within the home, parental language ideologies, and patterns of language learning. With respect to foreign language literacy planning, socioeconomic status influences approaches to foreign language learning, children's home-based activities, and the learning facilities provided by parents.

These findings highlight the need for greater educational support in literacy planning and efforts to improve families' socioeconomic conditions. Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples, apply longitudinal and mixed-method approaches, and examine the roles of caregivers, digital resources, and targeted literacy interventions.

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