



**The Effect of the Social Class on Learning
English by the Students of the Department of English,
College of Education for Women, Al-Iraqia University**

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Abstract

This research tackles the role of the social class in learning English language by the students of the department of English, College of Education for Women –Al Iraqia University. It aims at:

1. Identifying the concept of the social class and its types.
2. Knowing the effects of the social classes on learning English language by these students.

The data of the application side of the study was taken from the students' answers to the test and the questionnaire that have been made to determine students' social class and its effect on their learning of English language.

The procedures followed in this study included a comprehensive test of English language for 50 students from the Department of English College of Education for Women –Al Iraqia University annexed by a questionnaire to determine the social class each student belongs to.

The findings showed that most of the students examined have failed in the exam and most of them belong to the low social class. Even those who passed the exam got weak grades. This indicates that low social class has a negative effect on students' level of learning English language, and vice versa.

Keywords : low social class, middle social class, high social class, learning English language.

أثر الطبقة الإجتماعية في تعلم اللغة الإنكليزية من قِبَل
طالبات اللغة الإنكليزية في كلية التربية للبنات ، الجامعة العراقية

المُستخلص

يتناول هذا البحث دور الطبقة الإجتماعية في تعلم اللغة الإنكليزية من قِبَل طالبات اللغة الإنكليزية، كلية التربية للبنات، الجامعة العراقية. تهدف الدراسة الى:

١. بيان مفهوم الطبقة الاجتماعية وانواعها.
٢. معرفة تأثير الطبقات الاجتماعية على تعلم اللغة الإنكليزية من قِبَل هؤلاء الطالبات.

في الجانب التطبيقي من البحث، تم الحصول على المُعطيات من إجابات الطالبات على الإختبار الذي خضعن له والإستبيان الذي أُلِفَ لتحديد الطبقة الاجتماعية التي تنتمي اليها كل طالبة لتبيان تأثيرها على تعلمهن اللغة الإنكليزية.

إن المنهج الذي إعتدته الباحثة في الجانب التطبيقي، يقوم على عمل إختبار شامل للغة الإنكليزية على خمسين طالبة من قسم اللغة الإنكليزية، كلية التربية للبنات، الجامعة العراقية مُلحق بإستبيان لتحديد الطبقة الاجتماعية التي تنتمي اليها كل طالبة.

وقد أظهرت نتائج الإختبار أن معظم الطالبات الممتحنات لم يجتزن الإختبار، وإن معظمهن ينتمين الى الطبقة الاجتماعية الدنيا.

وحتى الطالبات اللواتي نجحن في الإختبار كان نجاحهن ضعيفاً مما يؤكد على حقيقة أن الطبقة الاجتماعية الدنيا تؤثر سلباً على مستوى تعلم الطالبات للغة الإنكليزية، وعكسه صحيح.



1. Introduction

1.1 The Basis of the Study

Social class is a notion that refers to a group of people with similar levels of wealth, influence, and states. It has its intellectual basis in theories of social and political economies that associated with figures like Karl Marks and Max Weber. The most common classes are the high, middle and low classes.

High social class is a term refers to aristocratic and high-society families who have higher levels of disposable income and reside above both the low and middle classes of a social hierarchy.

Middle social class refers to those people who have more money than the lower class, but less than those above them. They have more opportunities of learning and consumption than those of lower class.

Low social class refers to those people who are below the middle class and having the lowest social standing as a result of the low income and lack of skills and education.

Poverty has its impact on educational achievement. People of lower social class are not able to affirm a premier education or continuing education, unlike those of high social class who have all the means to get high levels of education.

Even in language, wealthy people seem to have an advantage over speaking correctly than do lower class people.

In Iraq, learning process is also affected by the social class. After so many years of war, the collapse of the social infrastructure had its impact on Iraqis who are struggling with unemployment and poverty. As a result, most students suffer from a general weakness in all the fields of education, including learning English language.

1.2 Aims of the Study

The study aims at:

1. Identifying the concept of social class and its types.
2. Showing the effects of the social classes on learning English language by the students of Department of English, College of Education for Women –Al Iraqia University.



1.3 The Procedure of the Study

This research is divided into two parts; the first is the theoretical background, and the second is the practical. On the practical side, a comprehensive test of English language has been made on 50 students from the department of English in the College of Education for Women, Al Iraqia University, accompanied with a questionnaire containing questions to determine the social class each student belongs to.

Statistical equations have been made on the results of the test and the answers of the questionnaire to show the correlation between the social class and students' level of learning English language.

1.4 Limits of the Study

The study is limited to only 50 female students from the department of English, College of Education for Women, Al_ Iraqia University to show the relationship between the social class and the students' level of learning English language.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study has a two-Fold Value: theoretical and practical.

On the theoretical part, it presents a detailed survey of the concept of social class and its types which are hoped to enrich students' and researchers' knowledge about them.

On the practical side, the research identifies the difficulties faced by Iraqi Students in learning English language affected by the social class. Therefore, the research is thought to be valuable to the teachers of English language, textbook writers and test analysts.

2. Social Class

2.1 What's Social Class?

Social class is a term which refers to a group of people with similar levels of wealth, influence and states. The most common classes being the upper, middle and lower classes (Cliffs Notes, 2016).



Social class is a notion that has its intellectual basis in theories of social and political economies dating from the nineteenth century, and theories of social class that are associated with figures like Karl Marx and Max Weber (Meyerhoff, 2011: 165).

Marx related social structure to the position of individual in relation to the means of production. He drew a fundamental distinction between those who produce capital or resources and those who control the production of capital which others produce. The former are the working class, also called (proletariat), and the latter the middle class or the (capitalists). (Llamas, et al, 2007: 51-52)

However, by the beginning of the twentieth century, western society was changing; there was increasing number of people in the middle class whose wealth was not linked with capital or property. The approach of Max Weber allowed for this greater complexity of modern societies.

Weber agreed with Marx in seeing class as founded on objectively given economic conditions, though class divisions derived not only from control or lack of control of the means of production, but from economic differences which have nothing directly to do with property.

Weber saw class as a composite of economic wealth, linguistic and other social behavior and attitudes and aspiration (Llamas, et al, 2007: 51-52; Meyerhoff, 2011: 169).

Class is almost universal phenomenon. It occurs in all modern complex societies of the world. Each social class has its own status in the society, status is associated with prestige. The relative position of the class in the social set up arises from the degree of prestige attached to the status. A social class is distinguished from other classes by its customary makes of behavior.

This is often referred to as the life-style of a particular class. It includes mode of dress, kind of living, the means of recreation and cultural products one is able to enjoy, the relationship between parents and children. Life-styles reflect the specialty in preferences, tastes and values of a class.

The basis of social classes is mostly economic but they're not only economic groups or divisions. Subjective criteria such as class-consciousness, class solidarity and class identification on the one hand and the objective criteria such as wealth, property, income, education and occupation on the other hand are equally significant in the class system (Sociologyguide, 2017).

Class affects whether someone is going to be accepted into a particular kind of school, the kinds of jobs they have access to the kinds of friends they make, in essence, the degree of status, power and perks people enjoy or lack in their daily lives.

People who enjoy more resources and greater class status live in contexts that enhance their personal power and freedom larger and safer living spaces, the means to buy high-priced goods experiences, and education that provides access to influential people, ideas and venues. The sociologists Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore (cited in Sparknotes, 2017) believe that stratification¹ serves an important function in society. In any society, a number of tasks must be accomplished. Some tasks, such as cleaning streets or serving coffee in a restaurant, are relatively simple.

Other tasks such as performing brain surgery or designing skyscrapers are complicated and need more intelligence and training than the simple tasks. Those who perform the difficult tasks are therefore entitled to more power, prestige and money.

Tumin, the sociologist, found that the income of an individual's family, beside gender, is very important. A family with more money can afford to send its children to college. As college graduates, these children are more likely to assume high-paying, prestigious jobs. Conversely, people born into poverty are more likely to drop out of school and work low-paying jobs in order to survive, thereby shutting them off from the kinds of positions that are associated with wealth, power and prestige (Ibid).

¹) Social stratification is a term indicates a process by which a society is divided into different layers or strata depends on factors as level of education, occupation, income and wealth (Cummins: 2017).

2.2 Types of Social Class

2.2.1 Low Social Class

This term refers to a class of people below the middle class. They have the lowest social rank or standing because of low income, lack of skills or education and the like (Cliffnotes,2016).

Usually the qualification of those people in education and training are lesser than those of the medial and upper classes, and their jobs do not need a high skill. And because many of them are poor, they concern themselves with the direct needs rather than future goals. (Kenton, 2018)

2.2.2 Middle Social Class

The middle class people fall between the low class and high class in a social hierarchy. People in the middle class tend to have a higher proportion of college degrees than those in the low class, have more income available for consumption and may own property. Middle-class people often are employed as professionals, managers and civil servants (Ibid).

2.2.3 High Social Class

The high, upper class in modern societies is the class whose members reside above both the low and middle classes of a social hierarchy. The members of this class have higher levels of disposable income, wield the greatest political power and exert more control over the use of natural resources.

While the high class makes up a small percentage of the overall population, it controls a large amount of the overall wealth (Ibid).

To sum up:

Social class is more than just how much money people have. It's also the clothes they wear, the music they like, the school they go to and has a strong influence on how they interact with others.



People from lower classes have fundamentally different ways of thinking about the world than people in upper classes.

Upper-classes people are different; what wealth and education and prestige and a higher station in life gives you is the freedom to focus on the self.

2.3 How does Social Class affect Education?

Social class affects education in the following ways: people of lower social status are not able to affirm a premier education, the necessary tools to complement a public education, or continuing education. Those people also have a harder time staying in school than people who live in a higher social status.

On the other hand, education is provided to people who come from all economic backgrounds and from all financial situations.

Children who live in poor situations may be expected to do more at home, take up a job to support their families and may not be able to focus solely on their studies. Moreover, areas that have a higher income bracket often have a better schooling system. (Birdsong, 2016)

In its major sense then, low social class is correlated with poverty and consequently has bad effects on education.

In this context Kristina Birdsong (2016) reveals some facts about how poverty has its impact on education:

1. Disadvantage even before birth:

Cognitive capacity is not just a matter of genetics, but can be strongly influenced by external factors like prenatal drug use, environmental toxins, poor nutrition, and exposure to stress and violence.

All of those are more prevalent in low-income households, and affect cognitive development from prenatal stage through adulthood.

2. Less verbal exposure:

A famous study by Hart and Risely (1995) (cited in *ibid*) demonstrated that by the age of four, poor children hear 32 million fewer spoken words than their better-off counterparts. More recent research has shown that (quality) of conversation differs as well. Parents with higher education and income are more likely to engage their children with questions and dialogues that motivate created responses, whereas parents in poverty often lack the time and energy for anything more than simple goal-oriented commands.

3. Poor sense of agency:

Children growing up in poverty usually experience life as a series of eruptive situation over which neither they nor their caregivers have any control. Therefore, they fail to develop a conception of themselves as free individuals able to make choices and acting on them to shape their lives, instead reacting to crises that are only magnified by their poor ability to plan a head or reflect. This doesn't only affect educational success, studies have shown that a low sense of control over one's life has important health impacts in all areas, regardless of finances or access to healthcare.

4. Low executive function:

Executive function skills such as impulse control, emotional regulation, management, prioritization of tasks and working memory draw on a limited supply of mental energy. But the continuous insecurities in life of poverty interfere with these functions by releasing stress hormones that direct energy away from them towards more basic survival mechanism. Constant exposure to these stresses in childhood can inhabit early development of the neural connections that enable executive function, leaving children with both academic and behavioral problems.

2.4 Social Class and Language Capacity

Differences in social class have the effect on the speech of individuals.

A famous study by Labov (1972) (cited in Yule, 1985: 191) combined elements from place of occupation and socio-economic status by looking at pronunciation differences among salespeople in three New York City development states, Saks (high status), Macy's (middle status) and Klein's (low status). Labov devised the sociolinguistic interview in order to get a range of speech styles from his subjects, from casual chatting to the reading of formal lists. One of the features Labov investigated is the postvocalic [r], in words such as (*guard*) or (*bird*), which is usually not pronounced in low class speech. In more formal styles, people use more of the pronunciation with [r].

There is a link between high-status speakers and more monitored, formal speech.

The use of [ŋ] as opposed to [ɪŋ] for the sound of *-ing* at the end of words like (*walking*) and (*going*) has been found to be much more common among low class speakers than among middle class speakers. According to this, language varieties can function as indicators of social identity (Traugott and Pratt, 1980: 310; Liams, etal, 2007: 54-55).

In a Black American English, it is extremely unlikely that upper-middle class², Black speakers would use multiple negatives in formal speech, such as (*Nobody never did nothing*) in the sense of (*Nobody ever did anything*). At the other end of the scale, working class Blacks speaking informally are extremely likely to use multiple negatives.

These social distinctions are also called varieties. Sometimes these varieties are intermixed with what are called dialects, as an indication of regional distinctions (Traugott and Pratt, 1980: 313).

²) In sociology the upper-middle class is the social group constituted by higher status members of the middle class. It is above the middle but below the wealthiest (Dictionary, 2019).



The accent and dialect of a person triggers different first impression of people. Some accents within a language can be seen as more desirable and higher social class than others (Pearce, 2017).

Wealthy people seem to have an advantage over speaking correctly than do lower class people. As stated by Paul Anderson, in National Equality, 6, "rich kids do better in all areas of education (including language) than poor children even before they start school. There is a connection between poverty and educational achievement. Recent studies have shown that by the age of 3, poor children are one year behind richer ones in terms of communication. Children who receive "free meal" at school are also more likely to lag behind in language skills in general".

William Wright (cited in Cabe, 2013) says "some ways of speaking have acquired regional, social and ethnic associations, becoming proxies for attitudes about particular regional and social groups" (Cabe, 2013).

The internal differentiation of human socialites is reflected in their languages. Different social groups use different linguistic varieties.

We can estimate the relative social status of the following speakers solely on the basis of the linguistic evidence given here:

Speaker A

I done it yesterday.

He ain't got it.

It was her what said it.

Speaker B

I did it yesterday.

He hasn't got it.

It was her that said it.

If we heard these speakers say these things, we would guess that B was of higher social status than A, and we would almost certainly be right. How is that we are able to do this sort of things?

The answer lies in the existence of varieties of language which have come to be called (social-class dialects). There are grammatical differences between the speeches of these two speakers which give us clues about their social



backgrounds. It is also probable that these differences will be accompanied by phonetic and phonological differences (Trudgill, 1995: 22).

In the 1960s and 1970s the British sociologist Basil Bernstein (cited in Llamas, et al, 2007: 160) suggested that the reason why so many low-class children were failing in the British educational system was that they grew up learning what he called a (restricted code) in contrast to the (elaborated code) acquired by children of middle-class. These different codes provided different ways of understanding meaning from the world.

Bernstein (cited in *ibid*) described how low-class children learn a restricted code in position-oriented families where social control is exercised through the authority of parents and fixed-role relationships. There is an emphasis on solidarity and shared communal meaning, and children learn to use language in relatively implicit ways, with short sentences containing few objectives and adverbs linked by repetitive conjunctions like 'and' or 'then'. On the contrary, in middle-class, person-oriented families, communication is more open and roles are less fixed.

Social control is exercised through explanation and appeals to the child as a person, and children are encouraged to express their own ideas and viewpoints. Bernstein argued that, children brought up with an elaborated code are used to drawing on a wider range of syntactic and semantic linguistic forms and are able to use language explicitly organize experience conceptually and articulate decontextualized ideas much more easily than low-class children.

Bernstein's ideas about the restricted and elaborated code were adopted by some educationalists to demonstrate that low-class children suffer from language deprivation (Llamas, et al, 2007: 160).

Wodak (cited in *ibid*: 58) used the technique of oral retelling of news stories as a means to find an evidence for Bernstein's dissent. She found that people of middle-class would focus on accuracy, and backgrounding their own stance, while low-class people incorporated the news report into their own world view, with comments like 'you can't do anything about it anyway'.



Wodak found statistically important class effects. She attributes this to the middle-class speakers' years of socialization, through schooling, into producing 'over sophisticated', fact oriented summaries, rather than 'natural' mode of telling narratives used by low-class respondents. These differences are compatible with Bernstein's view, and have the potential to lead to discrimination. (ibid)

To sum up:

The accent and pronunciation of words we use defines what part of the country we originate from. Speech is a form of social identity and is used, consciously or unconsciously to indicate membership of different social groups or different speech communities.

It has been found that there is a great tendency to use forms by those who left the educational system at an early age which are not commonly used in the speech of those who go on to the college. For this, people are often ridiculed and thought of as ignorant when their language skills are different than what is considered to be the "norm" (Yule, 1989: 190-191; Cabe, 2013).

2.5 Prestige in Language

Based on what is said previously, the light should be shed on the term 'prestige' and its relation with language.

'Prestige' is a term that indicates respect and admiration given to someone based upon factors as being rich or powerful, a reputation for high quality, success, or social influence (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2017).

Linguistic prestige, in sociolinguistics, is the degree of respect and social value attached by members of a speech community to certain languages or dialects.

Since language is interwoven with culture, there is a strong relation between the prestige of a group of people and the prestige accorded to the language they speak. Sociolinguistic prestige based upon factors such as: rich literary heritage, high degree of language modernization, considerable international



standing, or the prestige of its speakers. Having many of these attributes means the language is viewed as being of high prestige. On the contrary, a language or dialect with few or none of these attributes is viewed as being of low prestige (Nordquist, 2017).

2.6 The Nature of the Social Class in Iraq and its Impact on Learning

In Iraq we can find the same universal classification of the social class but with some differences. The most dominant class in Iraq is the middle class which began with the birth of the modern Iraqi state in 1921 and witnessed a steady expansion.

It was strong among the members of Iraqi society when the Iraqi economy was strong and the country was one of the stable and developed countries. This class was preventing the decline of society towards any cultural or political curdle.

In his article "The Decline of the Middle Class" (2009), Haider Qassim Al-Hajami (cited in ٢٠١٦، (الثرواني) declared that the middle class is important, because it lies between the concerns of the other two classes, as the wealthy upper class descends towards intellectual inactivity and indulge itself in maximizing profits and accumulation of capital, while the working class and the poor suffer the concerns of living and weak ability to accomplish their demands.

The middle class is capable of crystallizing its ideas, organizing its demands and shaping its movement in the political system. The relative prosperity enjoyed by the middle class gives it autonomy and stability in social mobility and leadership, and its educational and cultural structure enables it to present itself as a class capable of leading organizations under civil order.

However, this class began to fade for many reasons. The most important one is the successive wars against Iraq and the economic blockade during the nineteen's up to 2003. This results in poverty and class inequality as well as political chaos and administrative and financial corruption which increase the number of the poor and make Iraq on the top of corruption in the world.



The phenomenon of poverty and class inequality in the Iraqi society plays a dangerous role for its negative impact on public life and on members of society who suffer from the lack in living and health services.

In Iraq, the war has exhausted the economic situation of the country and its monetary currency, and the continued erosion of this class will cause the people of any country to risk their lives in order to live, even if this will lead them to commit crimes to overcome poverty and destitution (ibid).

The collapse of the social infrastructure had its impacts on Iraqis who are struggling with unemployment, poverty and the effects of war, while social services and the health and educational systems are failing, unable to adequately meet the needs of the Iraqi population.

After so many years of war in Iraq, children are bearing the brunt of the hardships facing families, especially the families of war-widows. Such dietary deficiencies affect cognitive development and cause moderate or severe stunting that can lead to irreversible long-term learning disabilities.

Although education is free in Iraq, school attendance is not without direct and indirect costs, and some families have insufficient money to meet the basic needs of a child's education.

The majority of children not completing school are from the most impoverished classes found mainly in rural central and southern Iraq (Blais, 2010: 2-3).

As a consequence, a new middle class has emerged in Iraq, but it seems that the time is early for them to understand the traditions and way of life of the old splendid middle-class.

The new middle-class people and their children, spend money lavishly without changing rural life or the rough urbanization they live. They showed a clear lack of culture and civilization which creates a social chaos added to the current security and political chaos. (Blais, 2010: 2-3)

3. Data Analysis

To show the effect of the social class on the learning of English, a comprehensive test of English language has been made on 50 students from the department of English, College of Education for Women, Al-Iraqia University, accompanied with a questionnaire to determine the social class each student belongs to. The results of the test show that 33 students out of 50 have failed, and only 17 students have succeeded.

The researcher presupposes that one of the main reasons behind this failure is that most of these students belong to low social class which affects their learning of English language negatively.

To improve this hypothesis, the researcher has collected data from the questionnaire (which has been formed by a statistical expert), and arranged them in tables to numerate the information related to the social class.

The reliability coefficient of Cranbach Alpha is used to measure the reliability of the measurement tool for the internal consistency.

This study consists of two main variables:

The first variable is the social class, and the second one is the individuals' skills and motives to learn English language, which can be subdivided into:

- a. motives, and
- b. skills

After applying the reliability coefficient of Cranbach Alpha on these variables, it has been shown that the internal consistency degree of the test and the answers for both variable was high, a matter which makes us accept these answers and consider them as a basis in the study.

The study considers the first variable (social class) as an independent variable, because it is an influential case, whereas the second variable (a person's skills and motives for learning English language) is a dependant variable, because it is affected case.

There are two hypotheses in the statistical study:

1. The first hypothesis: there is a moral correlation between independent variable (social class) and the dependant variable (individual's motives and skills for learning English language).

2. The second hypothesis: there is a moral effective relation between the independent variable (the individual's skills and motives for English language).

To cover the detective side of the first hypothesis, the simple Linear Regression Pattern has been used, whereas a multiple Linear Regression Pattern has been made to cover the detective side of the second hypothesis.

The results show that there is a strong moral and effective correlation between the social class and individual's motives and skills for learning English language. Thus, both hypotheses are valid.

The results show that the (R^2) value, which represents the Explanatory Ability of the Regression, is (0.636), which means that the Linear Regression Pattern can explain (63%) of the influential relationship between the two variables, and the rest is attributed to other factors.

Accommodation Area	The unsuccessful	Rate	Successful	Rate
Rural areas and Townships	23	70%	11	65%
Capital	10	30%	6	35%

Table -1- The accommodation areas of the students

Ownership of housing	The unsuccessful	Rate	Successful	Rate
Privately owned house	28	85%	14	82%
Rent	4	12%	3	18%
House bypass	1	3%	0	0%

Table -2- Student's ownership of housing

Number of family members	The unsuccessful	Rate	Successful	Rate
1-3	0	0%	2	12%
4-6	10	30%	10	59%
6 and more	23	70%	5	29%

Table -3- Number of students' Family members



العدد التاسع والثلاثون

الجزء الثاني / أيار / ٢٠٢٠

جامعة واسط
مجلة كلية التربية

Family income	The unsuccessful	Rate	Successful	Rate
Low	2	6%	0	0%
Middle	28	85%	17	100%
High	3	9%	0	0%

Table -4- Students' Financial State

Father's Academic Achievement	The unsuccessful	Rate	Successful	Rate
Illiterate	2	6%	0	0%
Primary	4	12%	0	0%
Intermediate	7	21%	5	29%
Preparatory	5	15%	4	24%
College degree	15	46%	8	47%
Others	0	0%	0	0%
Mother's Academic Achievement	The unsuccessful	Rate	Successful	Rate
Illiterate	9	27%	0	0%
Primary	6	18%	3	18%
Intermediate	6	18%	3	18%
Preparatory	3	9%	3	18%
College degree	5	15%	6	35%
Others	4	12%	2	12%

Table -5- Educational level of students' parents

Here is other information from Yes, No questions:

Do you speak English with your family?	The unsuccessful	Rate	Successful	Rate
Never	19	58%	5	29%
Sometimes	13	39%	9	53%
Always	1	3%	3	18%

Table -6-

Do you find learning English important to keep up with informational and personal progresses?	The unsuccessful	Rate	Successful	Rate
Yes	29	88%	15	88%
Sometimes	4	12%	2	12%
No	0	0%	0	0%

Table -7-

Do you use other resources to develop your English language skills?	The unsuccessful	Rate	Successful	Rate
Seldom	20	61%	6	35%
Sometimes	12	36%	8	47%
Always	1	3%	3	18%

Table -8-

Do you feel that learning English gives you special social skills to deal with upper classes in your society?	The unsuccessful	Rate	Successful	Rate
Yes	25	76%	13	76%
No	8	24%	4	24%

Table -9-

Do you think that learning English will provide a job opportunity in the future?	The unsuccessful	Rate	Successful	Rate
Yes	32	97%	15	88%
No	1	3%	2	12%

Table -10-

Do you think that learning English gives you a high confidence in yourself and a high status in the society?	The unsuccessful	Rate	Successful	Rate
Yes	26	79%	15	88%
No	7	21%	2	12%

Table -11-

These tables shed light on some aspects of the social class that most students who took the exam belong to.

As has been illustrated in the theoretical background of the research, talking about a social class implies talking about many aspects as accommodation area, types of housing, the financial state of the family, number of the family members, parent's level of education, etc, as well as the individual's various motives in life including her motives for learning and acquiring skills and self education, etc.

It has been mentioned also that people who belong to a high social class enjoy privileges that people who belong to a low social class don't have, as education opportunities, appropriate residence, and others.

We knew also that people of the low social class live in poor residential areas which are characterized by a rustic and low public style, and lots of them live in the margins of the capital or in the rural areas.

If we have a look on table (1), we find that most of the students³ who failed in the exam live in the borders of the capital in the rural areas and townships, and they from about 70% of the total number of the students. This actually is considered to be important indicator about the type of the social class that most students belong to.

In addition, table (3) shows that 70% of the students live in big families which consist of six people and more. This means that these students live in crowded houses whose miscellaneous expenses cannot be fulfilled, because

³Almost 71% of the grades of the students who passed the exam range between (average to weak) which indicates a general weakness in learning English.

85% of their financial income is within the middle level which can hardly afford a good level of living for such big families, as illustrated in table (4).

It's worth noting that 59% of the students who succeeded in the exam live within families consisting of 4-6 members only, this means that they live in less crowded houses which could be reflected positively on their educational level.

In table (5), we notice that there is a statistical variation in the educational level between the two parents. While we see that 46% of the fathers have college degrees, we also see that 27% of the mothers are illiterate. This percentage is the highest in the field of "Mothers' Academic Achievement" of table (5). Other percentages are distributed on other educational levels: 18% primary, 18% intermediate, and 15% college degree.

In this context, it's important to mention that a female education in any society is strongly correlated to the awareness and knowledge of that society. As has been illustrated previously, families of high social class usually exert more efforts to educate their children, males and females equally, whereas families of low social class pay less attention to educate their children because of many reasons, such as low educational and cultural awareness, and poverty which could be a reason that these families prefer to educate the males and oblige the females to work at home.

The role of the mother inside her family shouldn't be neglected. A well educated mother instills value and love for knowledge in her children, which is reflected on their educational achievements positively, and vice versa. The mother has the closest link to her children and she's the direct supervisor on their daily life activities including overlooking their homework. No wonder then if we find lots of those students have low educational level.

Another factor that affects students' fluency in English language is speaking the language with the family members. Actually, a person's level of knowledge and culture is correlated with speaking a foreign language and being acquainted with its culture, the thing that the researcher couldn't find in the students examined.

Table (6) shows that 58% of these students do not use English language in their houses a matter which gives us an idea about the low cultural level of these families in general.

If the students practice this language with the family, they will get new vocabulary and they will improve their pronunciation. This is why we find that 53% of the students who passed the exam speak English with their families (sometimes), and 18% of them speak the language (always) a matter which increased their level in learning English.

At the time we refer to the importance of learning a foreign language to increase a person's knowledge and culture, we find that tables (9-11) show high percentages of seeing English language as a prestigious mean to increase self-confidence in the society, or to have a job in the future. Less concentration is paid to the cultural importance of the English language.

Students' skills of language can also be improved by using external resources, such as books, magazines, net, television, etc, besides the curriculum. This is influenced by family's cultural awareness and its financial status. Table (8) shows that 61% of the unsuccessful students do not use external resources to develop their language ability, whereas 47% of the succeeded students use these resources (sometimes) and 18% use them (always). This improves the fact that using external resources to learn a foreign language is so important to enrich students' knowledge and skills in English language and a helpful cause to succeed.

4. Conclusion

The research has arrived at the following conclusions:

1. Social class is a term that has its intellectual basis in theories of social and political economies and theories of social class associated with figures like Karl Marks and Max Weber referring to a group of people with similar levels of wealth, influence, and states. The most common social classes are the high, middle and low classes.
2. Class affects peoples' different aspects of life including learning. Enjoying greater class status means having greater opportunities in life including high level of education that provides access to influential people, ideas and venues.
3. On the contrary, people who belong to low social class having lesser qualifications in education and training than those of middle and high classes.

4. The results of the test that has been made on 50 female students from the department of English, College of Education for Women, Al Iraqia University show that 33 of these students have failed and 17 only have succeeded. After analyzing students' answers to the questionnaire, it has appeared that most of these students belong to a low social class which could be the reason behind this bad performance. These results enhance the fact that low social class has adverse effects on peoples' learning, including learning English language.

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Appendix I – The test

Name:-----

English Efficiency Test



الجامعة العراقية

كلية التربية للبنات

قسم اللغة الانكليزية

Note: Answer all questions .

1-A- Correct the following words: (5 marks)

-absantarticulchildrene cloudyderty
.....

B-Change the following verbs into past: (5 marks)

- close cry.....Stop
.....rob.....buy.....

2-A-Put the following words in correct sentences .(10 marks)

(Dog, Plant, Sky ,Bird, Faithfull, beautiful, painful , risky ,summer, trip)

3-Correct between brackets the following pronouns : (10 marks)

- I invited (he) to my birthday party.
- He told (I) that he was too busy to meet him.
- All my friends gave me (they) voices.
- Ask (they) to stop talking.
- This camera is from (I) to (you).

4-Give the Arabic meaning of the following nouns and then say what is the special character of them ?(20 marks)

(salt ,sugar ,rice ,silk, glass ,dust ,wood ,iron, tea, sand)

5-Do as required : (30 marks)

A-Choose the correct word from the following :

- There are (a few, a little , many) animals in the zoo.
- How (much , many ,a little) trees are there in your garden.



-There are (a little , a lot of , any)birds in the sky.

B-Fill in the blanks with a suitable verb that bellows of the following sentences (am, is, are, was, were).

-Look! Theypainting the school.

-The Bananas I bought very cheap.

- I staying at home today.

C-Choose the correct tense from the following:

-Sheby Bus(never come , comes never ,never comes)

-Do they.....Arabic? (speaks , speak ,speaking)

-Every morning, shesure that every things is Ok
(makes ,made, make , making).

D-Choose one from the following:

-Sami to apply for this job tomorrow. a-will b-shall c-is going d-may

Iwait until he mends my car. a- shall b-will c- going to d- am

-Next week , hesixteen. a-is b-will be c-shall be d-would be

E- Make questions from the following statements:

-She has got three pencils .(How many).....

-I get up at 7 a.m. (When)
.....

-She came by plane.(How)
.....

6-Write a bout (100 to 150 words) a well-structured paragraph on one of the following topics.

1- Education is the most important element in social development.

2- The role of women in our society.

3- The negative and positive aspects of using technology in our life.

(20 marks)

Appendix II – The Questionnaire

1. Accommodation Area

- a. capital b. Rural areas and townships

2. Ownership of housing

- a. privately owned house b. Rent c. house bypass

3. Number of family members

- a. 1-3 b. 4-6 c. 6 and more

4. Family income

- a. Low b. Middle c. High

5. Father's academic achievement

- a. Illiterate b. Primary c. Intermediate
d. Preparatory e. College degree f. Others

6. Mother's academic achievement

- a. Illiterate b. Primary c. Intermediate
d. Preparatory e. College degree f. Others

7. Do you speak English with your family?

- a. Never b. Sometimes c. Always

8. Do you find learning English important to keep up with informational and personal progresses?

- a. Yes b. Sometimes c. No

9. Do you use other resources to develop your English language skills?

- a. Seldom b. Sometimes c. Always



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10. Do you feel that learning English gives you special social skills to deal with upper classes in your society?

a. Yes b. No

11. Do you think that learning English will provide a job opportunity in the future?

a. Yes b. No

12. Do you think that learning English gives you a high confidence in yourself and a high status in the society?

a. Yes b. No