Objectives

This study investigated the effects of home background and parental involvement in determining the attainment of pupils in the lower primary classes before streaming took place at the end of primary four and attempted to answer four research questions:

Effects of home environment (SES): Are effects of home environment on pupils' academic performance (composite marks obtained in English, Second Language, Mathematics) similar in pupils of different socioeconomic status (SES) categories as reflected by parents' educational level and income?

Effects of home environment (Time engaged in television viewing, reading, and doing school work): Does the home environment of Singaporean pupils in lower primary classes, in terms of frequency of time engaged in activities such as television viewing, reading, and doing school work, affect their success in academic attainment, as reflected by a composite of marks obtained in the three subjects?

Effects of home environment (Ethnicity of parents): Does the home environment of Singaporean pupils in the lower primary classes, in terms of ethnicity of parents, affect their school performance, as reflected by a composite of marks obtained in the three subjects?

Effects of home environment (Parental involvement): Which type of parental involvement do Singaporean parents prefer? Is there a relationship between pupils' attainment in primary schools and their parents' involvement? Is there evidence to suggest that parental involvement is related to maintenance of attainment over the first four years in primary school?

Methodology

One mission and eight government primary schools located within the four zones in Singapore in Housing Development Board (HDB) estates were identified for the study. The sample for the study comprised whole classes of the entire population of Primary 1, 2, 3 and 4 pupils in these nine schools. The SES of pupils was computed using the formula: SES = (father's educational level + mother's educational level + (father's income + mother's income))/2. Pupils with the lowest third of SES scores were classified as falling under a low SES group, and those with the highest third of SES scores, a high SES group. The rest were classified under a medium SES group.

The end-of-year examination results of pupils from P1 to P4 in the subject areas of English Language, Mathematics and Science were obtained from their schools. These results reflected the pupils' class performance and provided their achievement indexes. For each academic level (P1 - P4), pupils were banded into three different achievement levels - low, average or high, based on their end-of-year examination results. In the computation of pupils' achievement scores, the subjects English Language, Mathematics and Second Language were selected as they represented core subjects in the school academic curriculum at the lower primary level. Low-achieving pupils would represent those who scored less than 50 marks for their composite scores, average-achieving pupils would be those who scored between 50 to 74 marks inclusive, and high-achieving pupils would be those who scored 75 marks and above.
A questionnaire for parents was specially designed to obtain information regarding the parents' SES, quantity of time pupils engaged in activities such as watching TV, doing homework, and the extent of involvement of parents with their children's learning. Part 1 of the questionnaire consisted of 18 items which asked for demographic information on family members, use of language at home, amount of time spent doing school-related and leisure time activities. Part 2 of the questionnaire had 25 questions which were aimed at ascertaining parental attitudes and the nature and type of involvement parents had and wished to have with regard to their children's education.

Altogether, about 4,000 parents agreed to participate in the study. After extracting incomplete returns the responses of 3,759 parents (94%) were used in the analysis. A large percentage of the parents had received secondary education (68.2%), 18.3% of them had tertiary education and 12.7% of them had little or primary education. The majority of parents in this sample earned between $1,500 and $2,500 a month, with 24.3% of them earning above $3,500 a month. Among the parents of the high-achievers, it was noted that 71.3% earned more than $3,500 a month.

**Summary of the Research Findings**

1 **Effects of Home Environment (SES)**

- Analyses of significant group differences on the basis of SES showed that composite marks obtained in school subjects in English Language, Mathematics and Second Language differed significantly for all combinations of SES categories - between the high and low, the high and medium and the medium and low.

2 **Effects of home environment (Time engaged in TV viewing, reading and doing school work)**

- Results showed that all three groups of pupils (high-achieving, medium-achieving and low-achieving) spent similar amounts of time in television watching and doing school work.

- A higher percentage of the high-achieving group spent more time on reading than those in the other two groups.

- A higher percentage of the high-achieving group was also found to be engaged in all three activities.

3 **Effects of home environment (Ethnicity of parents)**

- Analyses of mean scores for English Language, Mathematics and Second Language, as well as composite scores for the three subjects showed significant main effects as a function of parents' ethnicity.

- Significant group differences in mean scores (for each of the three academic subjects and composite scores) were found between the Chinese and the other two ethnic groups - the Malays and the Indians - with the exception of Mathematics and Second Language, where there were no significant group differences between the Chinese and the Indians.

- Malay and Indian pupils' pupil mean scores for English Language and Mathematics differed significantly.

4 **Effects of Home Environment (Parental Involvement)**

- It was clear that parents were anxious about their role in the education of their children. They were content to allow teachers to be responsible for this although some P1 and P3 parents had some misgivings.

- Parents, especially those whose children were in P2 classes, would like to improve communication with schools.

- On the whole, parents were not keen to be involved in policy-making decisions, although some would welcome official parent involvement programmes, with volunteer parents to coordinate these.

- A measure of the predictability of parental involvement for school attainment is the predominance of responses of parents of children in the high-achieving group to questions about resources, aspects of the learning environment, tuition, guidance and coaching for recreational activities.
• In particular, parents of children in the P1 high-achieving group wanted to be involved in the provision of resources and aspects of the learning environment.

Parents of children in all high-achieving groups indicated that they were involved in the provision of guidance and tuition in school subjects.

Perhaps the most interesting observation about parents of children in high-achieving groups was the fact that they provided for recreational coaching.

• The results also showed that a majority of parents of children in high-achieving groups provide ample material resources.

• Parents of high-achieving children, especially those whose children were in P1 and P3 classes, were more anxious than others about their role in the education of their children.

Clearly, children in high-achieving groups have parents who are anxious about maximising every opportunity for their children, even in areas not directly related to schoolwork.

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Other researchers in the team were:
Pamela Sharpe, Audrey Lim Swee Eng and Mary Anne Heng

Researcher's e-mail contact:
QUAHML@nievax.nie.ac.sg

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**ABSTRACTS**

**Lectal Power in Singapore English**

Dr Phyllis Chew Ghim Lian
School of Arts, NIE

While there have been many studies on the multilingual and polyglossic nature of Singapore society, most have been basically descriptive or attitudinal. What has not been emphasized is the social, economic and political implications of the inequality of sociolects in terms of their association with prestige and social acceptance. This paper examines the use and importance of lectal power in a crucial encounter - the admission interview in the multilingual and polyglossic society of the Republic of Singapore and analyses to what extent such a power, or the lack of such a power, affects the outcome of such an event.

The specific focus is on the extent of lectal power possessed by the interviewee since this correlates with her chances of success in the interview. Such a power involves the careful management or control of language on several levels. At the syntactic level, the competent or incompetent use of syntactic features such as tag questions, the be copula, and aspect markers are examined. On the lexical level, the choice of verbs and nouns used by the interviewee reveal the extent of lectal power in her possession. Analysis on the pragmatic level shows how the pragmatic force mapped on a linguistic structure by a non-acrolectal speaker is often systematically different from that normally assigned by an acrolectal speaker. Finally, lectal power is studied on the discoursal level through an examination of the interviewee's attempts to negotiate linguistically on the lectal cline.

The implications for pedagogy are obvious: lectal