

Julia Nieścioruk

Akademia im. Jakuba z Paradyża w Gorzowie Wielkopolskim

ORCID: 0000-0002-3737-1433

SES as a creator of linguistic learning pathways for students with diverse needs

SES w roli kreatora językowej ścieżki edukacyjnej uczniów o zróżnicowanych potrzebach

Abstract

The socioeconomic status (SES) of a learner's family of origin plays an important role in the process of learning a foreign language, a skill that is currently indispensable to function in a dynamically changing reality. This status, imposed by the conditions in the family environment, dictates the educational path of an individual, their personality, interests, and resources. The article presents how and to what extent economic and social status creates the linguistic educational path of students with diverse needs. It points to two prominent issues: the role of parents, teachers and the school environment, and peer relations and their role in compensating for deficits related to foreign language learning.

Keywords: socioeconomic status (SES), students with diverse educational needs, foreign languages

Streszczenie

Status społeczno-ekonomiczny (SES) rodziny pochodzenia ucznia odgrywa ważną rolę w procesie uczenia się języka obcego, umiejętności, która jest obecnie niezbędna do funkcjonowania w dynamicznie zmieniającej się rzeczywistości.

Status ten, narzucony przez warunki panujące w środowisku rodzinnym, kształtuje ścieżkę edukacyjną jednostki, jej osobowość, zainteresowania i zasoby. W artykule przedstawiono, w jaki sposób i w jakim stopniu status ekonomiczno-społeczny kreuje językową ścieżkę edukacyjną uczniów o zróżnicowanych potrzebach. Wskazuje się na dwie istotne kwestie, jakimi są: rola rodziców i nauczycieli oraz środowiska szkolnego, a także relacje rówieśnicze i ich rola w kompensowaniu deficytów związanych z nauką języka obcego.

Słowa kluczowe: status ekonomiczno-społeczny, uczniowie ze zróżnicowanymi potrzebami, języki obce

1. Introduction

Socioeconomic status (SES) of the family of origin has a significant/substantial impact on every sphere of a child's life, including their education (its availability, course, possibilities of development, choice of the type of school, level etc. SES is formed by many variables and one of them is the material status of the family. However, the current material situation of many families in Poland is downright appalling. The Institute of Labour and Social Affairs determines that the minimum subsistence level in Poland comes to 692 PLN per month per person in their 2022 Poverty Report. Thus, a total of 1.6 million people in Poland are said to have lived in extreme poverty in 2021, including 333,000 children and 246,000 seniors. In Poland in 2021, when inflation was at a much lower level than today, this included more than 40% of citizens. Moreover, for most types of families, the income criteria for receiving social aid will be lower than the extreme poverty line in years to come¹.

Inflation is a pressing issue that affects everyone; however, it does not necessarily mean that it affects everyone equally. For some, it entails an increase in spending in a particular sphere, which will not have a substantial impact on their household budget, but at the same time will exclude many people from cultural or social life or even restrict access to education, including the access to learning foreign languages. Families with low SES will no longer be able to afford overpriced extra-curricular activities, school fees, supplies, textbooks, etc., which are essential for the child's proper development. Thus, child poverty and the childhood experienced therein dictates the type of educational path pursued by an individual. The choice of this pathway is beyond the child's control, as he or she cannot decide in which family he or she was born and what resources (material or otherwise) their family owns. However, poverty should be considered as a multidimensional phenomenon that does not only relate to material issues².

This unfavourable position of children with a low SES of their family of origin is also amplified by the lack of cooperation and collaboration between parents and teachers and the educational staff at large. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for a modern school to fail to conform to the format of a (self)learning organisation and therefore to be ill-equipped to identify and support students with diverse needs. It is worth noting

¹ Szlachetna Paczka (2022) *Raport o biedzie 2022*, <https://www.szlachetnapaczka.pl/raport-o-biedzie/>

² Ibidem.

that this is especially true in terms of the lack of knowledge, motivation and willingness on the part of the teacher – the person most closely involved with the students^{3,4}.

In an era of globalisation, in which the first foreign language of choice is the current global “king”- English, the availability of high-quality language education for pupils with diverse needs (including those from low SES families) is severely limited. The goal of public, community and private educational organisations should be, first and foremost, inclusion, i.e., to strive for equal opportunities for pupils to access quality language education that enables them to obtain a better profession and further education. However, it is also important for teachers to be open to dialogue with the family as well as with the pupils themselves; to modify the curricula in such a way that full inclusion is possible.

Undoubtedly, another important factor in creating favourable conditions for inclusion and foreign language learning is the quality of peer relations. A learner-friendly atmosphere and a feeling of security and acceptance from peers are key elements of quality language education. There is a considerable amount of research confirming the important influence of the peer group on the quality of education (including language education), as well as on the process of educational inclusion. Thus, nurturing the highest quality of relationships in the classroom is crucial for the proper development of students. These two principal issues are addressed in the further paragraphs of this paper.

2. The significance of parents and teachers in compensating for deficits related to foreign language learning

The American Psychological Association (APA) describes socioeconomic status (SES) as a position held by an individual (or a group) within society, which is a result of several factors, such as one’s place of residence, housing conditions (including amenities and furnishings), degree and kind of received education, income, type and prestige of occupation (concerning employment status) and affiliation with social organisations⁵.

³ Z. Janiszewska-Nieścioruk, J. Nieścioruk, *Szkola jako organizacja (samo)uczująca się?*, [w:] *Edukacyjno-terapeutyczna podróż w lepszą stronę*, red. K. Moczia, t. 1, Kraków 2017, s. 25-38.

⁴ Z. Janiszewska-Nieścioruk, J. Nieścioruk, *O roli rodziców i nauczycieli w kreowaniu wysokiej jakości kształcenia języków obcych w szkole ogólnodostępnej*, [w:] *Pedagogika specjalna - przeszłość, teraźniejszość, wyzwania przyszłości. Wybrane aspekty*, red. K. Ćwirynkało, M. Zaorska, A. Żyta, Olsztyn 2021, s. 99-112.

⁵ American Psychological Association, *Task Force on Socioeconomic Status. Report of the APA Task*

As highlighted by the APA and numerous researchers, SES has a substantial impact on an individual's life, as it often determines its quality, available development opportunities, and privileges. Moreover, it significantly determines a person's level and state of both mental and physical health, as well as lifespan in general⁶.

SES, as a multidimensional construct is difficult to measure. It is usually divided into three levels: low, middle, and high. This distinction describes the various places an individual or their family may belong to (in relation to others). SES is, therefore, applicable to all areas of behavioural and social science, including study, practice, teaching, and advocacy. In other words, the socioeconomic status of the family of origin is a determining factor in the individual's resources. Said personal resources can be understood as all the internal and external capacities possessed by an individual that influence their functioning and determine their resilience. Therefore, we can differentiate between internal personal resources, which refer to the beliefs and expectations of the individual, and external resources, which refer to social support⁷.

High SES of the family of origin indicates material wealth as well as prestigious occupation, comfortable living conditions and an overall high social status. On the other hand, low SES may be understood in terms of unfavourable living conditions (low-income home or experiencing poverty), occupation of low prestige, and an overall

Force on Socioeconomic Status, Washington DC 2007; E. H. Baker, *Socioeconomic status, definition*, [w:] *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Health, Illness, Behaviour, And Society*, red. W. C. Cockerham, R. Dingwall, R. S. Quah, Hoboken 2014, s. 2210-2214; R. H. Bradley, R. F. Corwyn, *Socioeconomic Status and Child Development*, „Annual Review of Psychology” 2002, vol. 53, nr 1, s. 371-399.

⁶ American Psychological Association, *Task Force on Socioeconomic Status. Report of the APA Task Force on Socioeconomic Status*, Washington DC 2007; N. E. Adler, J. M. Ostrove, *Socioeconomic status and health: what we know and what we don't*, „Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences Journal” 1999, vol. 896, s. 3-15; S. L. Szanton, C. L. Seplaki, R. J. Thorpe Jr, J. K. Allen, L. P. Fried, *Socioeconomic status is associated with frailty: the Women's Health and Aging Studies*, „Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health” 2010, vol. 64, nr 1, s. 63-67; K. Steenland, S. Hu, J. Walker, *All-cause and cause-specific mortality by socioeconomic status among employed persons in 27 US states, 1984-1997*, „American Journal of Public Health” 2004, vol. 94, nr 6, s. 1037-1042; N. E. Adler, K. Newman, *Socioeconomic disparities in health: pathways and policies*, „Health Affairs (Millwood)” 2002, vol. 21, nr 2, s. 60-76; L. V. Scaramella, T. K. Neppel, L. L. Ontai, R. D. Conger, *Consequences of socioeconomic disadvantage across three generations: Parenting behaviour and child externalizing problems*, „Journal of Family Psychology” 2008, vol. 22, s. 725-733.

⁷ R. H. Moos, J. A. Schaefer, *Coping Resources and Processes: Current Concepts and Measures*, [w:] *Handbook of Stress: Theoretical and Clinical Aspects*, 2nd Edition, red. L. Goldberger, S. Breznitz, New York 1993, s. 234-257.

low social status. Therefore, high SES provides an individual with an appropriate, highly stimulating environment through which proper development of personality, temperament, specific values, and interests takes place. A person born into a family with high SES has more opportunities and chances for development than a person born into a family whose SES can be considered average or low. Lack of material resources, which is one of the decisive factors determining the level of SES, even despite the high level of its other factors, significantly limits access to quality education (including language education). Such families, despite the high level of parental education, lack the funds to provide the necessary support for their children to attend prestigious public schools, language schools, or participate in extracurricular activities. Although the child's talents and abilities are recognised, the possibility of funding the necessary conditions for their proper development is limited or even impossible⁸. Moreover, when children of low-income groups are not exposed to a healthy and stimulating environment, they may grow up feeling insecure and inferior, with an unhealthy attitude towards people and objects. Thus, it is evident the extent to which socio-economic status influences a person's reality and personality. According to Sarsani (2011), there is a significant link between socioeconomic class and cognitive and psychomotor performance in children, which is assumed to be related to creativity. According to the author, high-income families can create favourable environments and facilities for the development of creativity⁹.

However, it is worth mentioning that the child has little control over the social situation in which he or she is born, nor does he or she have a choice as to what family he or she belongs to and all the resources available to them. Consequently, the child will be burdened with several handicaps and barriers resulting from the low status of his or her parents. One such constraint may be, for example, the availability of extracurricular foreign language classes^{10,11}. What is more, parents with low SES are oftentimes not only unable, but also unwilling to support their child in acquiring

⁸ R. H. Bradley, R. F. Corwyn, *Socioeconomic Status and Child Development*, „Annual Review of Psychology” 2002, vol. 53, nr 1, s. 371-399.

⁹ M. R. Sarsani, *Socio-Economic Status and Performance on Creativity Tests*, „Encyclopaedia of Creativity” 2011, s. 360-363.

¹⁰ J. M. Senia, T. K. Neppel, C. G. Gudmunson, M. B. Donnellan, F. O. Lorenz, *The intergenerational continuity of socioeconomic status: Effects of parenting, personality, and age at first romantic partnership*, „Journal of Family Psychology” 2016, vol. 30, nr 6, s. 647-56.

¹¹ C. W. Mueller, T. L. Parcel, *Measures of socioeconomic status: Alternatives and recommendations*, „Child Development” 1981, vol. 52, s. 13-30.

a quality language education, e.g. they do not urge their children to study foreign languages or seek to travel abroad, which research has shown has a greatly negative impact on the student's mobility and consequently on their language skills and, in the future, on becoming competitive in the labour market. Limited mobility results in limited knowledge, experience, and resources. In other words, it is a vicious circle in which, due to the low SES of the family of origin, the child does not have access to resources which, in effect, only worsens the problem¹². In families with a high socioeconomic status, education is often one of the highest values and the most valuable resource for the individual. Meanwhile, in households where the most important thing is to provide all members with basic needs e.g., a warm meal, shelter etc., education is relegated to the background - it is not considered a priority¹³.

It is not only the parents and the family environment that can determine students' resources. Teachers also have an important role in compensating for students' foreign language learning deficits, as the effectiveness and quality of this process depend on the content, methods, techniques, and goals they select for their students. Therefore, a foreign language teacher should have sufficient knowledge and an elevated level of relevant competencies to prepare, conduct and evaluate the teaching process and adapt it to the diverse needs of his/her students, including children of low and moderate SES backgrounds¹⁴.

Socioeconomic status is significantly correlated with academic success, but past research has mostly focused on how it relates to first language development, rather than how it relates to second language or foreign language acquisition. It is unclear whether there are any elements that can mitigate socioeconomic status' impact on student learning. However, there is a direct correlation between SES and foreign language performance in many countries/regions. It remains unclear which factors could minimise this correlation and support low-SES students in improving their foreign language skills. A language gap caused by SES is explained in part by differences in the family literacy environment, such as the quantity and quality of verbal communication between parent and child, the frequency of language acquisition,

¹² J. F. Schwab, C. Lew-Williams, *Language learning, socioeconomic status, and child-directed speech*, „Wiley Interdisciplinary Review of Cognitive Sciences” 2016, vol. 7, nr 4, s. 264-75.

¹³ B. Mazumder, *Fortunate sons: New estimates of intergenerational mobility in the United States using social security earnings data*, „The Review of Economics and Statistics” 2005, vol. 87, s. 235-255.

¹⁴ S. Rapacka-Wojtala, *Rola nauczyciela (języków obcych) w kształceniu kompetencji komunikacyjnej uczestników proces dydaktycznego*, „Acta Universitatis Lodzianis Kształcenie Polonistyczne Cudzoziemców” 2014, vol. 21, s. 99-107.

and the availability of language resources. Language development and academic language ability are strongly influenced by the socioeconomic status of a student's family. There is a strong relationship between SES and linguistic repertoires, motivating beliefs in the acquisition of foreign languages, and the use of learning techniques¹⁵.

Thus, the teacher-student relationship should be the overriding value in this complex process of ordered systems and interdependent elements¹⁶ (Okoń 2003). It is also part of the foreign language teacher's responsibility to develop learners' skills and competencies. Therefore, effective education and upbringing depend on the teacher who, being permanently observed, becomes a role model for the learners. A foreign language teacher should consequently be characterised by specific personality traits, possess certain competencies, possess adequate knowledge and didactic skills upon which teaching is based, dispose of a repertoire of the best pedagogical procedures, be capable of reflection, have the ability to solve problems encountered and be aware of the need to continuously work on his/her competencies¹⁷.

SES also influences how and whether parents communicate and cooperate with the teacher and the school. Gayton (2010) conducted a study to determine the correlation of two variables - students' socio-economic status and their motivation to learn a foreign language. In the research, the author interviewed selected foreign language teachers from secondary schools (mixed comprehensive schools) - four came from Scotland, four from Germany, and three from France. It should be added that the schools in which the teachers worked were schools from so-called 'poorer' areas, with low SES. According to one interview with a teacher from Scotland, it was clear that neither parents, nor teachers, nor even the pupils themselves paid much attention to learning a foreign language - it was not valued or perceived, as necessary. Another teacher claimed that it was the inaccessible location of the school that could negatively influence the interest and motivation of parents and pupils to learn languages. At the same time, she added that even the school management clearly indicated a low value/attention to learning foreign languages. In France and Germany, on the other hand, the data collected shows a vastly different situation. The selected teachers of English (as a foreign language) indicated that their pupils are eager to learn the language, are highly motivated, and know how much they can benefit from knowing a foreign

¹⁵ L. Ma, L. Xiao, Z. Liu, J. Liu, *Teacher-student relationships moderate the link between socioeconomic status and foreign language learning: Evidence from China*, „Language Teaching Research”, Beijing 2022, s. 1-22.

¹⁶ W. Okoń, *Wprowadzenie do dydaktyki ogólnej*, Warszawa 2003.

¹⁷ R. Arends, *Learning to Teach*, New York, McGraw-Hill Inc. 1994.

language. Equally motivated are their parents, and school management. Thus, it can be concluded that pupils whose mother tongue is English are less motivated to learn a foreign language and are more likely to drop out of FL classes simply because they do not enjoy learning them and do not get much benefit from them. Among other things, they find learning a foreign language unpleasant and unrewarding. In contrast, students from Germany and France, despite their potential dislike for learning English as a foreign language, emphasize its paramount importance as an essential life skill¹⁸.

Ma et al. (2022) claim, that the correlation between low SES and EFL learning has become a topic of a broader discussion and a field for deeper academic exploration. The authors mention Coleman's (1988) theory of social capital¹⁹, according to which the relationship between students and teachers constitutes important social capital for them. This relationship has a particularly positive effect on students with low SES. What is more, according to Bretherton's (1985) attachment theory²⁰, a positive pupil-teacher relationship creates a sense of stability and security and thus also supports pupil autonomy and motivation to learn, which is supported by numerous studies²¹. As the authors of the article claim: "A large body of research indicated that positive TSRs improve students' academic emotion and performance, especially for disadvantaged students, such as those from low-SES families"²².

Furthermore, students may rely on their teachers as crucial attachment figures²³. Their educators may provide students with a safe space for exploring the school environment and engaging deeply in learning activities²⁴. Students are relieved of

¹⁸ A. Gayton, *Socioeconomic Status and Language-Learning Motivation: to what extent does the former influence the latter?*, „Scottish Languages Review” 2010, vol. 22, s. 17-28.

¹⁹ J. S. Coleman, *Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital*, „American Journal of Sociology” 1988, vol. 94, s. 95-120.

²⁰ I. Bretherton, *Attachment Theory: Retrospect and Prospect*, „Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development” 1985, vol. 50, s. 3-35.

²¹ L. Ma, L. Xiao, Z. Liu, J. Liu, *Teacher-student relationships moderate the link between socioeconomic status and foreign language learning: Evidence from China*, „Language Teaching Research”, Beijing 2022, s. 1-22.

²² *Ibidem*, s. 2.

²³ C. Bergin, D. Bergin, *Attachment in the classroom*, „Educational Psychology Review” 2009, vol. 21, nr 2, s. 141-170.

²⁴ M. Engels, J. Spilt, K. Denies, K. Verschueren, *The role of affective teacher-student relationships in adolescents' school engagement and achievement trajectories*, „Learning and Instruction” 2021, vol. 75, Article no. 101485.

academic and social pressure through supportive teacher-student relationships (TSR)²⁵. The relationship between socioeconomic status, TSRs, and student learning can also be explained by social capital theory²⁶. Therefore, educators need to gain an understanding of how to identify pupils with low socioeconomic status as well as receive additional training in prevention, remediation, and inclusion. It is necessary for such students to receive specialised assistance that is tailored to their specific needs and abilities. However, some student behaviours may be viewed negatively if they deviate from the publicly accepted standard. Such students risk being ostracised from their peer group as well as from social and cultural life. It is the skill of a teacher to be able to detect changes in a student's behaviour and then decide on a positive, supportive intervention. It is also worth noting that co-teaching and group teaching may be incredibly beneficial in compensating for any shortcomings that students from poor socioeconomic backgrounds may suffer during foreign language learning. Peer relationships are equally important in compensating for deficiencies inside the group.

3. The significance of parents and teachers in compensating for deficits related to foreign language learning.

It is paramount to emphasize the importance of language acquisition during early childhood. This critical developmental period presents an opportune time to introduce children to foreign languages. Through early exposure, children can utilize foreign languages more frequently, leading to accelerated proficiency. However, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds tend to only know one foreign language to a lesser extent and, more commonly, only their native language. The opportunities they have, right from the beginning, are significantly reduced in such circumstances. Thus, they have no chance of competing with their peers who attend schools with compulsory study of two or more foreign languages, extra-curricular private language classes,

²⁵ R. Bosman, D. Roorda, I. Van der Veen, H. Koomen, *Teacher-Student Relationship Quality from Kindergarten to Sixth Grade and Students' School Adjustment: A Person-Centered Approach*, „Journal of School Psychology” 2018, vol. 68; J. N. Hughes, Q. Cao, *Trajectories of teacher-student warmth and conflict at the transition to middle school: Effects on academic engagement and achievement*, „Journal of School Psychology” 2018, vol. 67, s. 148-162.

²⁶ J. S. Coleman, *Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital*, „American Journal of Sociology” 1988, vol. 94, s. 95-120; L. Ma, L. Xiao, Z. Liu, J. Liu, *Teacher-student relationships moderate the link between socioeconomic status and foreign language learning: Evidence from China*, „Language Teaching Research”, Beijing 2022, s. 1-22.

and regularly travel abroad and thus learn the language in a more organic way²⁷. Moreover, there are other factors that will influence the willingness and ability to learn languages, such as the influence and opinion of the school environment.

The article written by Brendan Bartram (2006), examines the nature and influence of peer group perceptions of pupils' attitudes to learning foreign languages (German and French) in semi-urban regions close to Birmingham, Frankfurt am Main, and Amsterdam. The researcher's experience in teaching and fluency in German and Dutch allowed for access to the settings and direct interaction with the research participants. The study aimed to uncover the nature and extent of peer influence on attitudes towards language learning through a qualitative survey involving 15-16-year-old pupils at comprehensive schools. The findings revealed that German studied as a foreign language, was perceived by many students as boring, useless, and difficult, which influenced their negative attitudes towards the language. However, certain students opted to study German due to the influence of their peers, which enhanced their enjoyment of the lessons. Conversely, Dutch students who perceived learning German as 'uncool' were unaffected by their peers' negative attitudes towards the language. They regarded their peers' opinions as inconsequential to their choice and it did not impact their subsequent motivation or performance in learning the language. The study also explored gender identity and how it relates to foreign language choice, finding that boys often reject language learning due to its feminized associations. Overall, the study highlights the importance of peer influences in shaping attitudes towards language learning, though it acknowledges that individual preferences can still prevail²⁸. However, negative attitudes of peers towards learning foreign languages may raise student anxiety which in turn, may negatively influence the learning process as a whole.

Based on Tillfors et al. (2012), it is evident that social anxiety is negatively correlated with peer acceptance and positively correlated with peer victimization. Studies have consistently reported concurrent links between social anxiety, peer acceptance, and peer victimization. Additionally, social anxiety has been found to predict decreases in relationship support for males and increases in peer victimization for females. These findings suggest that peers play a significant role in adolescent

²⁷ D. Schmerse, *Peer Effects on Early Language Development in Dual Language Learners*, „Child Development” 2021, vol. 92, nr 5, s. 2153-2169.

²⁸ B. Bartram, *Attitudes to language learning: a comparative study of peer group influences*, „Language Learning Journal” 2006, nr 33, s. 47-52.

mental health and that social anxiety can interfere with healthy peer relations and the language learning process²⁹.

Other studies, such as Huang et al. (2010), found that anxiety associated with language learning is linked to teacher and peer support. As a result of receiving more academic assistance from their instructor and peers, children are less anxious about failing exams and tasks. Furthermore, peer academic assistance and personal assistance were positively correlated with learning English as a foreign language³⁰.

Hence, for peer relationships to positively influence the foreign language learning process, it is imperative to prioritize the establishment of healthy dynamics. As Dang (2019) points out, interacting in the classroom and working in a friendly classroom environment is more beneficial to the student and their educational process than completing any classroom assignments. Relationships with peers, therefore, serve a variety of functions:

- offering close companionship and face-to-face interactions,
- developing cognitive schemes and perspective-taking abilities,
- providing emotional and social support,
- helping the formation of self-identity,
- enhancing the socialization process³¹.

They are, therefore, of immense importance for the process of language education and its quality since the opinion of peers and the class climate is often the decisive factor in choosing one's linguistic educational path. It is the classroom influence that determines which foreign language a student will select, whether they will want to develop their skills, be intrinsically motivated to learn a foreign language and whether they will enjoy the learning process as a whole³².

The SES of the family of origin as well as the SES of the educational institution are significantly correlated with children's academic achievement. Moreover, according to Buckingham et al. (2013), SES is a predictor of student literacy. Gaps in children's literacy abilities are evident when they begin school, with children from

²⁹ M. Tillfors, S. Persson, M. Willén, W. Burk, *Prospective links between social anxiety and adolescent peer relations*, „Journal of adolescence” 2012, vol. 35, s. 1255-1263.

³⁰ S. Huang, Z. Eslami, R. Hu, *The Relationship between Teacher and Peer Support and English-Language Learners' Anxiety*, „English Language Teaching” 2010, vol. 3, nr 1, s. 32-40.

³¹ Q. Dang, *The Role of Peer Relationships in Language Learners' Development: A Constructivist Perspective*, Asia-Pacific Conference on Advance in Education, Learning and Teaching 2019, s. 87.

³² *Ibidem*, s. 86-90.

low socioeconomic backgrounds tending to demonstrate lower proficiency in the two main aspects of emergent literacy – phonological awareness and vocabulary/oral language competency³³. Moreover, students with low SES are more likely to remain poor readers if they begin school as poor readers³⁴. In addition, students with diverse educational needs often develop fewer classroom friendships than their peers. Furthermore, a lower quality of the relationships formed was observed in comparison to students without any disabilities or other learning difficulties. The fact that these interactions and friendships are of low quality, influences the overall school and classroom environment and only deepens exclusion³⁵. Thus, students with diverse needs and disabilities are more likely to experience marginalisation in the school environment. Research by Avramidis et al. (2017), found that students with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream schools in the UK are more likely to be at risk of social exclusion and form fewer peer classroom relationships. In another study, children with behavioural challenges and students with autism spectrum disorders had a more challenging time forming relationships with their classmates³⁶. Moreover, Frederickson and Furnham (2001) studied the longitudinal stability of sociometric categorization in children with moderate learning disabilities aged 8-10 years in an English county. Said students were found to be less likely to be called ‘popular’ and more likely to be called ‘rejected’³⁷. This confirms the finding that students who do not fall into the so-called ‘norm’ are in fact marginalised by their peers and even excluded from the school community. Outcast from the classroom community, without a guaranteed sense of security, one of the basic human needs, they concentrate on the desire to gain favour with their peers rather than developing their language skills. Thus, the peer group’s acceptance is crucial for the proper development of the individual and the quality and direction of his or her linguistic educational path.

³³ J. Buckingham, K. Wheldall, R. Beaman-Wheldall, *Why poor children are more likely to become poor readers: The school years*, „Australian Journal of Education” 2013, vol. 57, nr 3, s. 190-213.

³⁴ N. Aikens, O. Barbarin, *Socioeconomic differences in reading trajectories: The contribution of family, neighbourhood, and school contexts*, „Journal of Educational Psychology” 2008, vol. 100, nr 2, s. 235-251.

³⁵ S. Wahl, M. Trauntschnig, L. Hoffmann, S. Schwab, *Peer acceptance and peer status in relation to students’ special educational needs, migration biography, gender, and socio-economic status*, „Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs” 2022, vol. 22, s. 243-253.

³⁶ E. Avramidis, G. Avgeri, V. Strogilos, *Social participation and friendship quality of students with special educational needs in regular Greek primary schools*, „European Journal of Special Needs Education” 2018, vol. 33, s. 1-14.

³⁷ Ibidem

4. Conclusions

Behavioural and social science research, practice, education, and advocacy are all impacted by SES. It affects overall human functioning, including our physical and mental health³⁸. A person's socioeconomic status impacts developmental outcomes in a variety of ways, whether at the level of their household, neighbourhood, or individual. A child or adolescent has not yet developed their unique SES, so their status is best defined by the SES of their parents or caregivers, which may have an impact on developmental outcomes regardless of their SES later in life³⁹.

Wealth, one of the key components of socioeconomic status, as found by Conley (2001), has a significant impact on educational attainment, including the probability of dropping out, being expelled, or receiving lower grades⁴⁰. As a form of economic capital, wealth may be converted into other forms of capital e.g., cultural, or social⁴¹. Besides creating a sense of economic stability, wealth can directly influence a family's economic well-being by generating revenue and/or reducing expenses that come out of the earned income⁴². As parents may be able to rely on financial resources if they are in need in times of crisis, they may be more inclined to spend their money on items and services that they do not consider necessary. Educational materials are typically considered "wants," rather than "needs". Thus, wealthy families that are feeling secure in their financial position may be more likely to invest in such products than those whose finances are not stable⁴³. Similarly important for an individual's

³⁸ American Psychological Association, *Task Force on Socioeconomic Status. Report of the APA Task Force on Socioeconomic Status*, Washington DC 2007; M. Bornstein, R. Bradley, *Socioeconomic Status, Parenting, and Child Development*, Erlbaum, 2003; J. S. Coleman, *Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital*, „American Journal of Sociology” 1988, vol. 94, s. 95-120;

S. F. Reardon, R. A. Valentino, D. Kalogrides, K. A. Shores, E. H. Greenberg, (2013), *Patterns and trends in racial academic achievement gaps among states, 1999-2011*, [online] <https://cepa.stanford.edu/content/patterns-and-trends-racial-academic-achievement-gaps-among-states-1999-2011>

³⁹ D. A. Hackman, M. J. Farah, *Socioeconomic status, and the developing brain*, „Trends in Cognitive Sciences” 2009, vol. 13, nr 2, s. 65-73.

⁴⁰ D. Conley, *Capital for college: Parental Assets and Postsecondary Schooling*, „Sociology of Education” 2001, vol. 74, s. 59-72.

⁴¹ Z. Janiszewska-Nieścioruk, *Edukacyjny wymiar ubóstwa osób z niepełnosprawnościami*, „Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy pedagogiki specjalnej” 2020, vol. 40, s. 112-126.

⁴² O. Melvin, T. Shapiro, *Race and Wealth*, „Review of Black Political Economy” 1995, vol. 17, s. 79-91.

⁴³ A. J. Orr, *Black-White Differences in Achievement: The Importance of Wealth*, „Sociology of Education” 2003, vol. 76, nr 4, s. 281; Z. Janiszewska-Nieścioruk, *Edukacyjny wymiar ubóstwa osób z niepełnosprawnościami*, „Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy pedagogiki specjalnej” 2020, vol. 40, s. 112-126.

holistic development, including the development of their language skills, are proper and positive peer group relationships.

Developing peer relationships is intended to improve the individual learner's growth, thus the initiative and willingness of the learner must be taken into consideration. It is only through their own decisions and sincere intentions that learners will be able to develop a sense of comfort in their peers' presence and companionship. It is worth ensuring the right climate in the classroom and school in order to reduce students' stress levels as much as possible and thus provide them with an environment conducive to language learning⁴⁴.

The socioeconomic status (SES) of a student can contribute to the experience of various emotionally challenging situations, not only from peers but also from school staff. Consequently, this can lead to marginalization, hindrances to proper development and functioning within the school community and beyond, deterioration of physical and mental health, as well as diminished aspirations and achievements. Zdzisława Janiszewska-Nieścioruk and Julia Nieścioruk (2021) point to the vital role of teachers (including, foreign language teachers) and the school in the process of blurring the differences and barriers in language education. The author argues that by adopting inadequate attitudes, teachers and the student's family may inhibit or completely limit the development of a pupil's linguistic abilities⁴⁵.

The school's engagement with pupils' families and the provision of adequate support to them is, therefore, a priority. It is worth noting that the preparation of many teachers in this and other areas, i.e., identifying and dealing with the problem of low SES of the pupils' families of origin, is still inadequate. In contemporary educational institutions, there is a prevailing emphasis on the didactic function, which prioritizes the delivery of information over the pedagogical function, which focuses on the holistic process of teaching and learning. Thus, it is necessary to adapt educational provision and services in such a way as to blur the differences between students with high, middle, and low SES. It is therefore recommended that language teachers should be prepared not only to recognise the learning problems of students with low SES, but

⁴⁴ Q. Dang, *The Role of Peer Relationships in Language Learners' Development: A Constructivist Perspective*, Asia-Pacific Conference on Advance in Education, Learning and Teaching 2019.

⁴⁵ Z. Janiszewska-Nieścioruk, J. Nieścioruk, *O roli rodziców i nauczycieli w kreowaniu wysokiej jakości kształcenia języków obcych w szkole ogólnodostępnej*, [w:] *Pedagogika specjalna – przeszłość, teraźniejszość, wyzwania przyszłości. Wybrane aspekty*, red. nauk. K. Ćwirynkało, M. Zaorska, A. Żyta, Olsztyn 2021, s. 99-112.

also to skilfully blur the barriers that low SES poses to their further language education. Such a teacher must, primarily, support their students, adequately adjust the content and material to their needs and abilities, or create an adequate, tailor-made way of teaching a foreign language.

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