

EXPLORING EFL LEARNING BARRIERS AND SUPPORT MECHANISMS OF INDONESIAN MIDDLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS LEARNERS

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Abstract

A learner's EFL learning can be affected by various factors, one of which is socio-economic status (SES), with most Indonesians belonging to the middle SES. This study employs a case study approach and semi-structured interviews to explore the barriers faced by middle SES Indonesians in EFL learning and the potential support mechanisms. The findings reveal three key themes: support from surroundings, access to learning resources, and self-efficacy. Support from surroundings and resource access are interrelated external factors, highlighting the importance of ease of access in the learning environment. Conversely, self-efficacy reflects learners' internal beliefs in their ability to succeed in EFL. The study suggests several support mechanisms, such as providing equitable opportunities for practice, enhancing access to learning materials, and fostering a supportive educational environment. Resources like visual aids, culturally relevant materials, and free language platforms can significantly benefit not only middle SES learners but others as well. Despite these insights, the study has limitations, including reliance on interviews and a small participant pool of four graduates. Future research should utilize multiple instruments and larger, more diverse samples for stronger findings. The insights gained can inform policymakers, educators, and families in enhancing EFL implementation, emphasizing that support should also come from home. Implementing educational policies that address the needs of all socio-economic classes can make learning more relevant and engaging.

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INTRODUCTION

English is considered as one of the most spoken languages in the globe. It is the largest language with over 1.4 billion speakers, whether as first, second, third, or higher language speaker, that can be found in 146 countries (Eberhard et al., 2023). It is also the official language of a number of major international organizations, including the World Trade Organization, the European Union, the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the International Monetary Fund. In Indonesia, English itself is considered as a foreign language or English as Foreign Language (EFL), the term used to define the study of English by non-native speakers in countries where English is not the dominant language (Nordquist, 2020). English has been taught at schools in Indonesia from the Dutch colonialization era before it was eliminated by the Japanese occupiers then reapplied after the independence of Indonesia for high schools using the 1947 Curriculum. English was taught as a compulsory subject in Junior High and Senior High School levels during the 1947, 1958, 1964, 1968, 1975, 1984, and 1994 Curricula. Only after the implementation of the 2004 and 2006 curriculum it was formally taught in the Elementary School level, although later it was changed from a compulsory subject into an

optional subject for Elementary School in the 2013 Curriculum (Alfarisy, 2021; Ardaya et al., 2022). Ministerial Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 067/1967 decided English as the first foreign language that has to be taught in Indonesia, especially in higher education level. At present, English is widely used as a global communication means in almost all aspects of life, such as academic, science, technology, economy and business, culture and art, and politics. It is also used as a tool for the utilization and development of science and technology to accelerate the development process in Indonesia (Alfarisy, 2021) Therefore, learning and mastering English becomes essential, as it facilitates communication with countries throughout the world.

Various factors can influence the success rate of students' EFL learning. Amirabadi & Razmjoo (2022) propose a model for factors that affect EFL learners' language proficiency. The model consists of (1) social factors, such as age, socio-economic position or status, educational level of parents, media and technology, and motivation; (2) cultural factors, such as tradition, gender, and interaction and intercultural awareness; and (3) linguistic factors, such as linguistic background, major, and historical affinity and word order. One factor that will be highlighted in this paper is socio-economic position or status. Socioeconomic status (SES) is a combined measure of an individual's economic and social standing in relation to others based on income, education, and occupation to determine where an individual or family stands in society. Typically, SES is divided into three levels –high, middle, and low– to provide a clear picture of the economic differences that exist in the society (Worthy et al., 2020). Nykoll (2018) noted that students' SES attribute is highlighted as an aspect that directly influences their impression, attitudes, achievement, and proficiency throughout EFL learning.

On the impression and attitude scopes, Hol & Yavuz (2017) explains that high SES household sees learning English as a prestigious and important for a future career, alas it may be regarded as unnecessary or useless in low SES household and low SES learners may think that they might rarely need English for their future career. On a similar vein, Nadilla et al. (2023) show that there is a strongly significant connection between students' socioeconomic status and motivation to learn English. Whilst on the achievement and proficiency scopes, Abbasian et al. (2020) found that family SES variables predicted Iranian EFL learners' listening and reading comprehension scores. Learners from middle and high socio-economic families may have a stronger sense of learning English language for different objectives compared to low socio-economic learners, making their EFL receptive comprehension scores higher than the low SES. Similarly, D'elia et al. (2023) found that students of higher economic-social-cultural status obtained better results in English listening and reading test than lower-status students. Rahmayani et al. (2022) also found that there was a positive and moderate correlation between student's SES factor and student's English achievement which can be explained by the availability of learning resources at home provided by parents. Trebits et al. (2022) revealed that children in immersion or bilingual schools showed greater receptive grammatical skills and receptive L2 lexical skills compared to children from regular schools and also revealed that socioeconomic background, factoring parents' occupation, was significantly related to L2 receptive grammar skills at the end of grade 4.

It is often noted that high SES students have better opportunity in learning a foreign language, as Amiri & El Karfa (2021) revealed that those with high socioeconomic status students have the opportunity to benefit from various facilities, such as the chance to have access to libraries, purchase books, encounter native speakers in foreign countries, attend workshops and conferences, and so on, thus affect their academic achievements positively while students low socioeconomic status students are less likely to experience these to encourage their fundamental skills development since they have fewer resources to make use of. Amirabadi & Razmjoo (2022) stated that economic position of family does have effect on learning a new language as having good economical position and high social class leads to

various types of classes or courses from childhood to adulthood and after all the courses, those richer ones are better in proficiency than those who unfortunately has not seen any English class because they had attended various courses that build their background knowledge.

In Indonesian setting, Paradewari & Mbato (2018) found that the upper SES learners had higher positive language attitude towards English than lower and middle SES in Indonesian context. Pramesty et al. (2022) stated that in Indonesia's rural context which typically associated with lower economy class, only a few of the students' parents in that area that have finished university, while most of them only graduated junior high or high school, even some only elementary school. Students from low-income families are less likely to be motivated and have a lack of vision when it comes to learning English. Parent's low socio-economic status also inhibits them from assisting and monitoring their children in learning English as they worked the majority of the time, even some are unaware of the importance of English and leave their children's education to the school system. Not only lack of time in helping their children's English learning, they also have fewer financial means to invest in English learning support services due to their SES. Sofyana & Pahamzah (2022) claim that Indonesian teachers believed that higher socio-economic class students typically possess more privilege to access greater language learning resources at home, including better technology devices, as a form of support from their parents. These high SES learners also have better access to English courses and competitions to level up their language proficiency. In the same vein, Dewi et al. (2024) emphasized that students from higher SES backgrounds generally have better access to resources and support, which enhances their language learning outcomes. This is what lower socio-economic students might lack that could hinder their EFL learning process, creating obvious gaps between the lower and higher SES learners.

However, middle SES students are rarely being highlighted in previous research if compared to lower and higher SES, especially in Indonesian context. This is somewhat regrettable given that the middle class has experienced significant shifts and changes in recent years across nearly all areas of global society, and there has also been increased attention to these movements, particularly from international organizations (Suter et al., 2020). World Bank (2019) claimed that by 2019, there are at least 52 million middle-class Indonesians, or one Indonesian in every five. They are those who consume IDR 1.2 to 6 million per month. Middle class in Indonesia are classified into two subgroups according to the 2016 per-capita consumption, which are Middle Class 1 (MC1) those who consume IDR 1.2 to 3.2 million per month or US\$ 7.75 to 20 per day and Middle Class 2 (MC2) those who consume IDR 3.2 to 6.0 million per month or US\$ 20 to 38 per day. BPS-Statistics Indonesia (2023) disclosed that in the 2021 Indonesia National Socioeconomic Survey data, 69.05% Indonesians fall into lower middle-income residents. Education can be used to see how middle SES thrive in EFL learning as they could still attend English courses, private schools or top public schools, and go to college, like upper SES do. López-Gopar & Sughrua (2014) point out that in Oaxaca, Mexico, the tuition at private schools is very expensive, resulting many of the students attending these private institutions could be considered middle or upper-middle-class, not only because of income but also because of their place of residence, consumption patterns, dressing habits, sociolect, and emerging English proficiency. World Bank (2019) revealed that by 2015, majority of the middle class children attend public senior high schools, with 64% of MC1 and 58% of MC2. This is due to there are many excellent public schools, especially in wealthy neighborhoods of larger cities where the middle class often lives. Moreover, the middle class begins sending their children to elite private schools. At senior high schools level, 6% of MC1 and 17% of MC2 children attend the exclusive private school. While middle SES learners are more benefited than lower SES learners, they do not possess the wealth of upper SES learners. As a result, they face challenges in attending more prestigious schools and gaining better access to essential language learning resources, such as English books and technology devices, which

can be quite costly. However, Lu (2021) reveals that the low and middle SES advanced EFL college learners in the study clearly acknowledged credited their parents for their language-learning success as change agents in locating, securing, and directing various English learning resources, as well as served as learning cheerleaders and collaborators, nurturers and motivators, intimidators, and role models while affording financial, social, cognitive, and emotional support to construct their children's level of English proficiency.

As mentioned earlier, middle SES learners are rarely highlighted in previous research compared to other SES, especially in the Indonesian context. These circumstances then lead to a gap in the barriers of middle SES learners compared to lower and higher SES learners, as little is known about the EFL learning barriers faced by middle SES learners. Of course, since most Indonesians come from middle SES, it is important to look into and point out the challenges that these middle SES Indonesian learners face in EFL learning. Therefore, it is important to pay more attention to them and find out the possible support mechanisms for their barriers so that they are no longer left out. To address these gaps, this paper addressed the following research questions: (1) *What barriers do Indonesians of middle socioeconomic status face in EFL learning?* and (2) *What possible support mechanisms can address these barriers?*

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This paper used qualitative case study design particularly because of its capability to gather participants' experiences, perceptions, and behavior and to allow participants themselves to explain how, why, or what they were thinking, feeling, and experiencing at a particular time or during an event of interest, also to allow the researcher to develop an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Tenny et al., 2022), which is suitable to describe the barriers of middle socio-economic status Indonesians in EFL learning and their solutions for the barriers.

Research Participants

The purposive sampling technique was used to gather the respondents for the interview, with the criteria (1) Indonesians who have learned English subject at least in senior high school and (2) consume IDR 1.2 to 6 million per month as according to the characteristic of Indonesian middle class from World Bank (2019), and four respondents were selected through these sampling. All respondents came from various educational background: Respondent 1 went to a vocational school in Bandung, West Java, respondents 3 and 4 went to the same top high school in Palembang, South Sumatra, while respondent 2 went to a mediocre high school in the suburb of Palembang. All respondents were graduates of English Language Education Bachelor degree from a state university in South Sumatra and respondent 3 was a graduate of English Language Education Master degree from a state university in South Sumatra.

Research Instruments

Twelve questions regarding respondents' socio-economic backgrounds, the influences of it towards their EFL learning, including motivation, attitude, learning ability, communication comprehension, challenges, interactions with fellow EFL students, access to learning resources or chances, and long-term consequences, also suggestions for teacher regarding EFL learning were asked on a semi-structured interview to collect the data from the respondents as this technique enables the researcher to gather open-ended data, explore participant thoughts, feelings, and beliefs regarding a specific subject, and dig deeply into personal and sometimes sensitive issues (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The questions were developed based on the aspects that could differ for learners from different SES backgrounds which are previously mentioned in the literature review.

The researcher conducted online interviews via WhatsApp calls at the end of March 2024, which were recorded, for about twenty minutes for each participant and asked the questions to get the data. The interviews were done in Indonesian to ease the respondents in answering the questions, then the responses were translated to English for the data analysis step.

Data Analysis

The obtained data were analyzed by doing some steps according to Creswell & Creswell (2023). First, the data were organized and prepared for analysis, involving transcribing the interviews. During this step, respondents' names were coded into Respondent-Number based on the order of the time they were interviewed (R1, R2, R3, and R4) and answers were ordered based on the questions being answered (Q1 to Q12). After that, reading through the gained data were conducted to get general sense of information and the overall meaning. The next step was coding the description of the data by analyzing the data information from the transcription that categorized it into several facts by labeling the categories with a term, for example, code PR if the answer mentioned parents or family, FR if it mentioned friend, and MT if it mentioned motivation. Next, the codes were grouped to generate themes. Then, these themes were interconnected into a story line. Lastly, the descriptions and themes findings were interpreted and represented in the research findings and discussion. To manage the research bias during the coding process, the researcher constantly applied reflexivity and confirmed the process to the respondents. The results were validated using member-checking by returning the findings to the respondents via WhatsApp messages to confirm the researcher's interpretation of what the respondent had said during the data collection.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

This section consisted of the results descriptions of the data analysis to answer the two research questions and organized according to each questions.

Barriers Faced by Middle SES Indonesians in EFL Learning

To answer the first question "*what are the barriers that middle socio-economic status Indonesians faced in EFL learning?*", three themes were generated in regard of what barriers do the middle SES face in EFL learning, as follow (1) support from environment, (2) access to learning resources, and (3) self-efficacy.

Table 1

No	Key themes	Key Themes of Barriers Example of quotations
1.	Support from environment	R3 Q6: ...awareness from parents towards English also affects performance even motivation of learners in learning foreign languages especially
2.	Access to learning resources	R2 Q9: Yes, several times, because access to get learning materials requires a quite large material (money in this case) thus it cannot be attained, but I used to attend English courses.
3.	Self-efficacy	R4 Q6: ...however, if I am in a circle between friends who are quite active in English or English community, then, I will stammer when speaking in English due to nervousness and pressure in the mind that "others will immediately realize if there is a mistake in the word spoken."

Support from Environment

External factors like support from parents, family, and friends were the most mentioned factors that influenced the respondents' EFL learning. Lack of supporting environment do hinder learner's learning process as their surroundings are not aware of the importance of learning English and cannot provide the necessary assistance for EFL learners, which can result

in their attitude and motivation towards EFL learning. As respondent 3, who has worked as an English teacher, mentioned:

R3 Q3: ...I also found that in reality, students still do not think that English is important, so they only learn to learn, do not have too significant forms of motivation.

Peers or fellow EFL learners are known to be the frequent partners for learners to practice their language proficiency. It is a gift to have partners that do not mind their peers' socioeconomic status and just interact as one should, as respondent 1 mentioned:

R1 Q8: ...My socioeconomic background makes it easier for me to interact with others. But beyond that, some people don't really care about social status and just interact well as they should. The same goes for me...

Unfortunately, this condition does not happen to everyone. There are still some people that rely their attitude and treatment towards other based on their socioeconomic background, belittle or not respond well other students that interact with them. As mentioned by respondent 2 and 3:

R2 Q8: ...if the student that I talk to or study with feel superior to me, they are reluctant to communicate because of the social gap.

R3 Q8: ...in terms of socioeconomics, it is said that a person is in groups, right, moreover we and other students have our own circles. If the socioeconomics are not the same or even far different, even that student do not balance between students with one another, and in English context it could affect the interactions with other students.

Supportive and aware environment, especially parents, can help learners to build their motivation and attitude in learning EFL which can also help them to increase their competencies. As the respondents mentioned:

R1 Q2: In my opinion, in an era like now, especially my family environment where the majority are educators, English is very important. So "inevitably" and indirectly we are encouraged to learn English as a foreign language. (Q3) I became more enthusiastic on learning and I have to be more active so I don't miss out.

R3 Q6: ...awareness from parents towards English also affects performance even motivation of learners in learning foreign languages especially.

R4 Q4: ...For example, by having more scope to communicate using English, of course, the way we speak, express opinions and have conversations can also be broader and improved. This may be due to broader and more mature topics of conversation.

Nevertheless, external support should be given to learners so that they can learn English better and thoroughly regardless of their socioeconomics.

Access to Learning Resources

Learners need learning resources to accommodate their needs in learning EFL. The higher the socioeconomics, the faster the access to learning English, especially to technologies and platforms which require internet connections, which could be used by teachers or learners themselves to get learning videos for learners. Access to supporting facilities and situations provides opportunities for learners to enhance their English language skills to a higher level. As mentioned in the introduction, some middle SES learners still can attend language courses, especially if they were in the upper-middle SES, as respondent 3 and 4 answered:

R3 Q4: At the time when my socioeconomic peaked, right, first my parents were still working, I was able to have the opportunity to take tutoring courses. English language skills are also more sharpened, there is more privilege to learn more about English.

R4 Q9: Yes, of course. I have attended English courses several times, in elementary, high school, and college. This is due to the facilities and supporting situation, so the opportunity to continue to improve the English skills becomes higher.

Yet, due to socioeconomic factor, not every learner, even those who are in the middle SES, has the privilege to access good and adequate learning resources, such as books, language courses, and modern technology information (computers, smartphones, internet access, etc.), as respondent 2 mentioned:

R2 Q9: Yes, several times, because access to get learning materials requires a quite large material (money in this case) thus it cannot be attained, but I used to attend English courses. (Q10) The consequences that I felt are that there is a slight lag in learning from some students because they cannot access learning materials due to different socio-economic backgrounds, and also significant differences in learning progress.

Experiencing lack of access to adequate learning resources multiple times could lag a learner's learning progress in the long run. Otherwise, greater access to learning resources can enhance or even fasten a learner's progress and skill in English.

Self-efficacy

If the two previous barriers are external-related, self-efficacy is internal-related, as in the students' belief in their capacity in learning EFL. Learners' awareness of their learning capabilities sometimes could inhibit their learning progress. They are aware that they are slow in learning things, including English, and they are not as capable as other students where they are at the moment. The thought that they made mistakes in pronouncing certain words cause them to stutter due to nervousness, as mentioned by respondent 1 and 4:

R1 Q6: Yes, actually the challenge that I felt is myself, because I think I am quite slow in learning a thing including English, where I think is imbalance with my family's socioeconomic. (Q7) The challenge was successfully overcome because it's all about coming back to myself and reassuring myself.

R4 Q6: ...however, if I am in a circle between friends who are quite active in English or English community, then, I will stammer when speaking in English due to nervousness and pressure in the mind that "others will immediately realize if there is a mistake in the word spoken."

However, self-efficacy can be increased with the help of socioeconomic aspect. It can contribute to one's motivation and attitude in learning EFL. One's confidence and enthusiasm can also somehow motivate other learners or people in general to improve their English skills, as respondent 1 and 4 mentioned:

R1 Q4: Yes, I think social economy or social status itself is quite influential, because in my mind there is an effort to 'maintain' or even increase my socioeconomic status, one way is to master English / have good skills in foreign languages with the aim of being able to interact globally and more broadly.

R4 Q8: With our confidence and enthusiasm in learning English, for sure other surrounding people will be more motivated to practice and improve their skills in learning English.

Barriers on confidence and awareness of learners does not only happen to middle SES learners but also to other SES learners as it relates to their psychological factor. However, being aware of their capabilities in learning, socioeconomics, and potential positive influences to others can motivate themselves to overcome obstacles as long as they reassure themselves that they are capable in learning English.

Support Mechanisms for the Barriers

To answer the second question "what are the possible support mechanisms for these barriers?", several ways were gathered from the respondents' answers. First and foremost,

equal chances for every learner to learn and practice. This solution can be done variously, including grouping students evenly regardless of their socioeconomic background to do group works or projects, also implementing “English Day” where students can speak and communicate in English with their friends for the whole day at school.

Second, more accessible learning material. Sometimes, teacher only told their students that they have to buy certain books as the main learning sources and this could cost them high if they come from a lower middle economy. This could be overcome by giving students more universal resources which every students can access or in a form of handouts from teacher, also providing examples of technology use in learning English, such as playing topic-related video through projector in front of the class or introducing free language learning platforms to students.

Lastly, creating a supportive learning environment. As mentioned in the barriers section, support from environment can be seen as the most crucial factor that could affect learners EFL learning progress. Creating a supportive learning environment could be done in various ways, such as motivating students to learn, providing access for learners to attend language courses or better language learning in general, and embracing students or people in general without discriminating their socioeconomics.

These three solutions are only a few of other possible solutions that can be done to overcome the barriers faced by middle SES EFL learners. Some other possible solutions are providing students with access to mentors or tutors who can offer individualized support and guidance, adjusting teaching methods and materials to meet the diverse needs of students which can include providing additional resources, such as authentic materials, visual aids, real-life examples, and practical activities, to help students understand and apply language concepts, and offering additional support services, such as counseling and academic assistance, to help students overcome personal and academic barriers.

Discussion

Barriers that middle socio-economic status (SES) Indonesians face in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning stem from several interconnected factors, including environmental support, access to learning resources, and self-efficacy. These elements interplay to shape the EFL learning journey, with socioeconomic context significantly influencing their outcomes. An exploration of these barriers reveals nuanced insights into the challenges and potential solutions for EFL learners in Indonesia.

Environmental support plays a crucial role in shaping learners' attitudes and access to EFL opportunities. For middle SES households, this support often translates into parental encouragement and material provision. Parents who value English learning tend to actively facilitate their children's educational pursuits by enrolling them in language courses, providing necessary resources like books, devices, and internet access, and fostering a conducive learning environment. Financial stability, which is more common in middle to upper SES households, enables this supportive behavior (Amirabadi & Razmjoo, 2022; Amiri & El Karfa, 2021; Sofyana & Pahamzah, 2022). In contrast, low SES households often face challenges in prioritizing English learning. Parents in these households may view English as a non-essential skill due to its limited utility outside classroom settings, especially in rural or non-urban areas where English exposure is minimal (Hol & Yavuz, 2017; Nadilla et al., 2023; Pramesty et al., 2022). This perception can hinder learners' opportunities to develop proficiency in the language.

The connection between environmental support and access to learning resources is evident. Learners who benefit from an enriched environment equipped with ample learning tools are more likely to excel in EFL. Access to quality resources, such as textbooks, language-learning software, and online platforms, significantly enhances their learning experience.

Moreover, the presence of a supportive family culture fosters positive attitudes toward English learning (Paradewari & Mbato, 2018). This support, however, is not solely limited to financial means. For instance, some parents from low SES backgrounds demonstrate resourcefulness by leveraging community assets like public libraries, radio stations, or video rental shops to provide their children with learning materials (Lu, 2021). Dawadi (2020) further emphasizes that regardless of their socioeconomic background, many parents contribute to their children's EFL success by creating a conducive home learning environment, collaborating with neighbors and relatives, and teaching test preparation strategies.

Self-efficacy, or learners' belief in their ability to succeed in specific tasks, is another pivotal factor in EFL learning. Research highlights that self-efficacy influences learners' motivation and performance. Many EFL learners, regardless of SES, struggle with low self-efficacy due to perceived slow progress or inferior competencies compared to peers. While self-efficacy is not exclusive to a particular SES group, socioeconomic factors do play a role in shaping it. For instance, Sun and Wang (2020) discovered that SES influences writing self-efficacy, though not necessarily writing proficiency. Learners from higher SES backgrounds typically exhibit greater self-efficacy, likely due to better access to resources and exposure to English. Similarly, students in urban areas tend to report higher self-efficacy compared to their rural counterparts, as urban schools generally provide greater access to English learning resources and opportunities (Ngoc Truong & Wang, 2019). However, it is worth noting that Li et al. (2024) found an equal relationship between self-efficacy, motivation, and academic achievement among EFL learners, regardless of their economic background, suggesting that other factors also contribute to building self-efficacy.

Addressing these barriers requires systemic solutions that promote equal opportunities and inclusive learning environments. Ensuring equitable access to learning materials and creating supportive environments can significantly benefit not only middle SES learners but also those from other socioeconomic backgrounds. Schools and educational institutions can play a critical role by providing culturally and socially relevant authentic materials that resonate with learners. Often, schools overlook such materials, missing an opportunity to enrich the EFL learning experience by incorporating topics related to learners' histories and cultural backgrounds (Bernal Pinzón, 2020). Encouraging debates, discussions, and sharing of diverse student experiences can also foster critical thinking and engagement in language learning.

Innovative teaching strategies can further support EFL learners from middle SES backgrounds. Methods such as Total Physical Response (TPR), song-based learning, and game-based approaches are particularly effective in making English learning enjoyable and accessible (Pramesty et al., 2022). Additionally, leveraging free or low-cost online resources, such as Duolingo and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), provides learners with alternative avenues to improve their proficiency (Ikawati et al., 2022; Ngoc Truong & Wang, 2019). These platforms offer structured and interactive learning experiences that can supplement classroom instruction and address the resource constraints faced by some middle SES households.

Another critical aspect of addressing barriers in EFL learning is fostering collaboration among stakeholders. Parents, educators, policymakers, and community leaders must work together to create a holistic support system for learners. For instance, parents can be encouraged to participate in their children's language learning journey, even if they lack proficiency in English themselves. Workshops and training sessions for parents can equip them with strategies to support their children's learning effectively. Meanwhile, educators can focus on developing inclusive curricula that cater to diverse learner needs and provide opportunities for meaningful language use beyond the classroom.

Policymakers have a pivotal role in bridging the gap between socioeconomic disparities and EFL learning outcomes. Initiatives aimed at improving infrastructure in rural areas, subsidizing educational resources, and promoting teacher training programs can contribute to

leveling the playing field. For example, investing in digital infrastructure can enable rural and low SES students to access the same online resources available to their urban peers. Additionally, programs that provide scholarships or financial aid for language courses can further support middle SES learners who might otherwise struggle to afford such opportunities.

The current body of research on middle SES learners in the EFL context remains limited, highlighting the need for further exploration. The evolving nature of the middle class globally presents an opportunity to investigate how socioeconomic changes influence language acquisition and EFL learning. Future research could adopt a broader geographic scope to ensure representativeness and capture the diverse experiences of middle SES learners across different regions. Comparative studies between urban and rural settings, as well as longitudinal research tracking learners' progress over time, can provide valuable insights into the interplay of environmental support, resource access, and self-efficacy in EFL learning.

In this study, the middle SES Indonesians face a complex interplay of barriers in EFL learning, with environmental support, access to resources, and self-efficacy being key factors. While financial stability often facilitates better support and resources, creative solutions and collaborative efforts can mitigate these challenges for learners from diverse backgrounds. By fostering an inclusive and resource-rich learning environment, leveraging innovative teaching strategies, and promoting equitable access to educational opportunities, stakeholders can empower EFL learners to achieve their full potential. As the middle class continues to evolve, future research must delve deeper into the unique experiences of middle SES learners to inform effective policies and practices in EFL education.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the challenges faced by middle socio-economic status Indonesians in EFL learning are multifaceted, encompassing environmental support, access to resources, and self-efficacy. These barriers underscore the importance of a supportive environment, where parents, educators, and communities play integral roles in shaping learners' attitudes and providing necessary resources. While middle SES households may possess financial stability that facilitates access to learning tools, resourcefulness and collaboration among stakeholders can bridge gaps for those with fewer means. Leveraging free or low-cost digital platforms, community resources, and innovative teaching strategies can significantly enhance the learning experience, ensuring that students from all socioeconomic backgrounds are equipped to succeed in EFL.

Moving forward, addressing these barriers requires a collective effort from policymakers, educators, and researchers. Policies aimed at equitable access to resources, improved infrastructure, and teacher training are critical for narrowing disparities between urban and rural learners. At the same time, research should focus on the evolving dynamics of middle SES learners, capturing their diverse experiences and challenges in EFL acquisition. By fostering inclusivity and providing culturally relevant materials, educational institutions can create an enriched learning environment that benefits all learners. Ultimately, a holistic and equitable approach to EFL education can empower middle SES Indonesians to achieve linguistic proficiency, contributing to their personal and professional growth in an increasingly globalized world.

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