

**THE EFFECT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE
PROFICIENCY ON THE SOCIAL CAPITAL AND
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF ECONOMICS
STUDENTS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS,
UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA**

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BY

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**Dissertation Submitted to
Othman Yeop Abdullah, Graduate School of Business
Universiti Utara Malaysia
in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Master Degree of Economics**

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ABSTRAK

Penggunaan Bahasa Inggeris menjadi semakin penting dalam sektor pendidikan dan pekerjaan. Peranan modal sosial patut diambil kira dalam membantu pelajar mencapai kecemerlangan akademik. Dapatan kajian terdahulu menunjukkan bahawa pelajar yang mempunyai kecekapan Bahasa Inggeris yang terhad akan menghadapi masalah dalam subjek-subjek peringkat tinggi. Maka, kajian ini menilai kesan kecekapan Bahasa Inggeris kepada modal sosial dan pencapaian akademik. Sehubungan itu, kajian ini menggunakan rekabentuk kajian tinjauan dengan mengambil sampel daripada 81 pelajar sarjana muda yang mendaftar kursus Ekonomi dan berada dalam tahun dua dan tiga di Universiti Utara Malaysia. Instrumen-instrumen diadaptasi berdasarkan konstruk-konstruk di dalam model berstruktur yang telah dibangunkan. Data kajian dianalisis menggunakan Model Persamaan Berstruktur bagi membolehkan analisis serentak bagi semua konstruk. Juga, anggaran magnitud kesan secara langsung dan tidak langsung antara konstruk dijalankan. Dapatan kajian mendapati bahawa kesan secara langsung yang signifikan wujud antara kecekapan Bahasa Inggeris dan kecemerlangan akademik, modal sosial dalam keluarga dan modal sosial luar keluarga. Kesan secara langsung yang signifikan juga wujud antara modal sosial dalam keluarga dan luar keluarga dengan kecemerlangan akademik. Kesan pengantara bagi modal sosial luar keluarga terhadap kecekapan Bahasa Inggeris dan kecemerlangan akademik adalah signifikan, tetapi tidak signifikan kepada modal sosial dalam keluarga. Hasil dapatan ini mencadangkan agar lebih banyak aktiviti menjurus kepada kecekapan Bahasa Inggeris dijalankan bagi membantu pelajar meningkatkan kecemerlangan akademik mereka.

Kata kunci: Kemahiran Bahasa Inggeris, Modal Sosial, Pencapaian Akademik

ABSTRACT

The use of English language becomes increasingly important, either in educational sector or working sector. The role of social capital should be taken into consideration in helping the students to achieve their academic success. Previous findings indicated that students with limited use of English faced problems in advance subjects. Thus, this study examines the effect of English language proficiency towards social capital and academic achievement. This study employed the survey research design and the sample comprised of 81 undergraduate students enrolled in Economics courses from year two and three in Universiti Utara Malaysia. The instruments were adapted based on the constructs in the structural models developed. The data has been analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling to enable simultaneous analysis of all the constructs and estimate the magnitude of the direct and indirect effects between the constructs. The findings show that there is a significant direct effect of English language proficiency towards academic achievements, social capital within family and social capital outside family, and from social capital within family and outside family towards academic achievements. The mediating effect of social capital outside family towards English Language Proficiency and academic achievement among economics students in UUM was significant but it was not significant for social capital within family. The findings suggest for more activities geared towards increasing students' English language proficiency to help them to increase their academic achievements.

Keywords: English language proficiency, Social Capital, Academic Achievement

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ELP	English Language Proficiency
SWF	Social Capital Within Family
SOF	Social Capital Outside Family
AA	Academic Achievement
SEM	Structural Equation Medeling
SCWF	Items for Social Capital Within Family
SCOF	Items for Social Capital Outside Family
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CGPAgrp	Cumulative Grade Point Average grouped
EngGrade	Grade received for English for Communication II
EPT	English Placement Test

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The use of English language as medium of communication becomes increasingly important. It is also an important factor for students to further their study and for employment purposes. Bachman (1990) defines language proficiency as the language ability or ability in language use while Oller (1983) defines language proficiency as an ability of several distinct but related constructs. An individual with inability or limited language proficiency will face difficulties in finding employment opportunities (Md Yasin, Wan Mohd Shaupil, Muhktar, Ab Ghani & Rashid, 2010; Jalaluddin, Mat Awal & Abu Bakar, 2009) and eventually will become a hindrance towards the growth of Malaysia because English language proficiency is now assumed to be one of the determinants for Malaysia growth (Hj Sarudin, Zubairi, Nordi, & Omar, 2008). Therefore, universities around the world have imposed a strict entrance procedure where students are required to present a certificate indicating their language proficiency such as IETLS and TOEFL. Malaysian students taking undergraduate courses locally will need the same certificate known as Malaysia University English Test (MUET), introduced in the year 2000 with the objective of enhancing English language ability of pre-university students (Md Yasin et al., 2010). The test will help to determine their proficiency in speaking, listening, reading and writing.

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